Beans Get Around by Bill Best

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES • EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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FOODWAYS

CELEBRATING TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF GRATITUDE FOR THIS PLACE WE CALL HOME

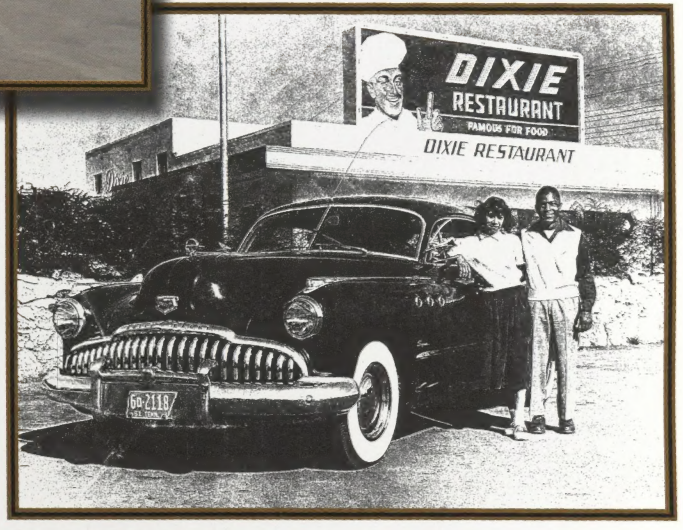
NOW & THEN
THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

We often begin our search for a "Then" photograph by visiting ETSU's Archives of Appalachia. There we came across a photograph that caught our fancy—the Dixie Restaurant (see right, below). Built in 1930, the Dixie was a mainstay on Main Street in Johnson City until it was demolished in 1972. It was replaced by a McDonald's (see right, above).

We were prepared to use these photographs for this issue's "Now" and "Then" page, when a serendipitous thing happened: One of our student workers, Kaleena Dugger, saw a working draft of this page and said, "I've got a photograph of my paternal grandparents standing outside the Dixie Restaurant."

◀ NOW

THEN ▶



Above left: Kaleena Dugger, 2009. Photo courtesy Randy Sanders.
Above right: Norma Christine and John David Dugger, Sr., circa 1951. Photo courtesy John David Dugger, Jr.

On the cover: Tomatoes outside a Nashville market, 2007. Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

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Spirits (Fall/Winter 2009)
By August 31, 2009

Appalachian High (Spring/Summer 2010)
By March 31, 2010

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THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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ANTIDOTE TO AGENDAS

Roberta Herrin
Center for Appalachian Studies and Services Director

This year, the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary. For the next few months, we will examine our achievements and successes, taking stock of what we do well and what we need to improve upon. One of the center's successes is *Now & Then* magazine, which has addressed a wide range of themes over the past quarter century—education, religion, music, stock car racing, the media, the Civil War, sports. It is fitting that this twenty-fifth anniversary issue of the magazine features food, which signifies prominently in every culture and no less in the center.

Food is a key ingredient in the culture of the center, whose staff and faculty work in four different buildings. We do not come together often, and when we do, it is usually for a business meeting of some sort. A monthly potluck lunch is the perfect antidote. Instead of working our way through an agenda, we fill our plates and sit down to good conversation.

Kirsti usually brings bread—whole-grain, healthy, hearty bread. At Thanksgiving, she fashions the dough into a turkey-shaped, edible centerpiece. At Christmas, Constance brought a wonderful dish of baked butternut squash, dried cranberries, and nuts. April once brought curried pumpkin-peanut-butter soup. John brings pigs-in-blankets or soup beans and corn bread. Norma sometimes brings collard greens with pot likker. Randy brings pesto pasta or Asian slaw. Ruth makes smashed cauliflower with Boursin cheese. Jane makes a fabulous bread pudding, complete with potent hard sauce. We work happily through the afternoon after eating Jane's bread pudding.

Luck is usually with us at these events. Once, as the clock struck twelve noon, we were about to sit down to brown rice, apple muffins, and key lime pie, but within two minutes, Theresa and her museum staff appeared carrying bowls and pots that balanced out the meal. The truth is, we would have been quite satisfied with rice, muffins, and pie. Though food brings us together, it is not the main reason we sit at table.

Food is the catalyst for a type of discourse that cannot take place in formal meetings. When staff, faculty, and students break bread together, we relax, tease, and laugh. We share stories and recipes. We come to know each other in ways not possible in structured settings.

The prime occasions of every life are characterized by food—the wedding feast, with elegant tiered cake and fondant icing; the wake, with neighbors' roast chicken, scalloped potatoes, and red velvet cake; all-day singing and dinner on the ground, with the signature dishes of an entire community. Another such occasion is the retirement party. Our executive aide, Rachel, will retire soon. In place of the usual reception and speeches and plaques, she has requested a potluck lunch. We are delighted to oblige.

For the next quarter century, we in the center plan to keep our academic and administrative larders stocked with food. We will maintain our belief that agendas alone do not advance our mission and purpose; the laden table—communal, inclusive, democratic, bonding—serves us equally well. If food were a more frequent complement to the workplace, life would go better. ❖

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Fred Sauceman

Much of the work that makes up this "Appalachian Foodways" issue of *Now & Then* came directly out of the classroom or, more accurately, out of the fields, orchards, and kitchens of the mountains, shaped and interpreted by students in a course called The Foodways of Appalachia, which we've been offering at East Tennessee State University since the fall of 2005.

Any study of Appalachian food culture must begin with the gifts of those who have populated the region from the very beginning of human habitation, the Native Americans. Call this the "corn and beans" issue. There's pickled corn on the cob, pulled out of a stone crock and shaken dry for dinner by student Anita Shell. Fellow graduate student Susan Shelton shares her family's procedure for making gritty bread, from the Cove Creek section of Carter County, Tennessee. It's an iron-skillet-baked marriage of corn from the Cherokees and heady buttermilk, a legacy of the Scots-Irish immigrants who settled in Appalachia. Student Margaret Carr fulfilled a classroom assignment by documenting how her relatives picked green beans, stripping two rows clean at a time, with both hands, in Johnson County, once Tennessee's most prolific green-bean-growing paradise. Margaret's story is paired with one by Bill Best of Kentucky, surely Appalachia's most passionate seed-saver, who writes of cut-shorts, green beans so tightly packed that their ends are squared.

In the Foodways of Appalachia course, we talk about mountain folks' storied resistance to governmental interference, and for his oral history assignment, student Patrick Loven, now teaching in China, happened upon a perfect example at a trout farm on the North Carolina-Tennessee line. The theme surfaces among the Italian bakeries of northern West Virginia, their precious pepperoni rolls once threatened by the long arm of the United States Department of Agriculture. It's a story of immigration, coal-mining, and independence that speaks of who we are as mountain people.

This issue of *Now & Then* acknowledges the symbolic role of strawberries in Cherokee culture and salutes the century-old tradition of making pure sugar stick candy on the Tennessee-Virginia state line, both subjects seen through the analytical eyes of students. Never imagining she would be allowed to conduct such a study for academic credit at a university, Susan Shelton filled her notepad at the cacophonous Beacon Drive-In, a Spartanburg, South Carolina, institution, where she deciphered the seemingly chaotic ordering system and discovered a new take on hush puppies.

Appalachian food is soup beans, corn bread, chicken and dumplings, and dried apple stack cake, certainly. But it is much more. Those Italian pepperoni rolls have as rightful a place on the mountain table as new potatoes and peas. The Hungarian cabbage rolls Italian immigrant Josephine Gresko reinterprets in her southwestern Pennsylvania kitchen are as much a part of Appalachia as pot likker. As my good friend John T. Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance, has written, Appalachian food is neither "insular" nor "monochromatic." It is, he writes, "richer and far more complex and curious than outlanders expect."

Alex and Jim Kalogeros celebrate Jim's ninetieth birthday. Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

We dedicate this "Appalachian Foodways" issue of *Now & Then* to an "outlander" who quickly became one of us, Jim Kalogeros—a man very much Hellenic yet very much of the Tennessee hills. A man driven by the never-quit spirit of Appalachia.

Over 1,000 people showed up at The Peerless Restaurant in Johnson City, Tennessee, the evening of February 9, 2009. While some were motivated by a "purchase one get another entrée of equal or lesser value free" offer, most folks came out to shake the hand or pat the shoulder of owner Jim Kalogeros, who had turned ninety years of age two days before.

Ruby Christian was there. She had worked the reservation stand out front for fifty-two years. Sherman Cox turned out, too. He was the Peerless butcher for three decades. Jim's old square-dancing buddies came in full force.

"I've been so busy smiling, I have wrinkles in my face," said Alex Kalogeros, her Greek beauty still shining through after sixty-two years of marriage to Jim.

When I called the following Sunday afternoon to get Jim's thoughts about the big birthday celebration, Alex told me he was at the restaurant, doing paperwork.

Despite his age, Jim puts in sixty-hour work weeks at The Peerless. Usually he doesn't work on Sunday, but all the hoopla put him behind on the books.

"I couldn't believe it," Jim said when I asked him to reflect on his party. "I'm a modest type guy."

Traffic came to a halt repeatedly on North Roan Street that night so cars could enter and exit the Peerless parking lot. Over 500 birthday cards had poured in.

"We've had twelve employees stay with us for over forty years," Jim recalled with great pride.

I'm not surprised. Jim Kalogeros is one of the most amazing people I've ever known. "I give Jesus Christ all the credit," Jim says. "He's the most important."

A descendant of explorer William Clark (of Lewis and Clark) and the son of a Greek immigrant, Jim earned his pilot's license at age fifty-four. He took up golf at sixty. He was water-skiing every summer on Boone Lake until the age of eighty-nine.

Permanently mounted over the fireplace at The Peerless is a photograph of John Kalogeros, Jim's dad. He came through Johnson City in the 1930s and accurately predicted a bright future for the town. The signs were right. East Tennessee State College was on the move, and the veterans at Mountain Home had just received a one-hundred-dollar bonus.

So in 1938, John opened a barbecue joint on Market Street. His seventy-one-year-old barbecue sauce recipe is still blended in The Peerless kitchen today and served over boneless chicken breasts. But the restaurant's future was to be carved out in beef.

Since the University of Tennessee Volunteer football team went undefeated and unscored upon during the 1939 regular season, John bet his friends steak dinners that UT would win the 1940 Rose Bowl. Tennessee lost, shut out by the University of Southern California Trojans 14-0. From that point on, The Peerless was known as a steak house, and a mighty good one.

Jim watched his father's business take hold, absorbing even the smallest of details along the way—adding peas to Greek salads and serving baskets of saltine crackers with butter on every table. The Kalogeros kitchen philosophy has always been deceptively simple: Buy the best meat you can find and do as little to it as possible.

The Peerless would eventually move to the north side of town, surrounded at the time mainly by pasture fields. But with his father's eye to the future, Jim knew that part of town would grow. In 2005, the Kalogeros family even opened up a plush new restaurant on the west side of Knoxville.

Along the way, Jim has been inducted into the Johnson City-Jonesborough-Washington County Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame and the Tennessee Restaurant Association Hall of Fame. He and Alex have raised two boys and two girls.

Jim Kalogeros represents a generation of Greek restaurant owners in the South who had the ingenuity to adapt their cooking styles to the tastes of the region, folks like the Regas and Peroulas families in Knoxville and the Koikos clan in Bessemer, Alabama.

And he embodies a very basic principle in the restaurant business: As an owner, you've got to be there to make sure everything runs right.

Laughing rapid-fire like a 20-year-old as he leans over a customer's table to share a memory on this night of celebration, Jim Kalogeros is in his element. He is peerless.❖

I AM THE SKILLET

Nancy Jane Earnest

I am the skillet from the green house
In sight of the covered bridge.
I am black, caked with memories of
Chicken fried for picnics on Roan Mountain,
And cream gravy that slid to the hips
Of every woman who ate, and to the bellies of men
Who recognized love in the warm white centers
Of delicately browned biscuits.

I am the skillet that fed generations
Of the family that played in the yard
Of the house that smelled of blackberry pie
And strong coffee—
The yard that hosted summer birthdays
With pineapple sherbet, cranked
By sweating uncles and impatient kids,
Called in from twilight hide and seek.

I am the skillet that lay idle when
Hands became too weak to
Heft me from the drawer to the stove's burner.
I waited as fast food bags
Cluttered the kitchen table
And picnics became feats for younger folks.
I waited, and waited, for the lump of lard
And the chicken that never came.

I am the skillet with the stories.
Mothers, aunts, fathers, children—
All have met me in the kitchen of
The green house near the river—
The house that now sits hollow-eyed,
Paint peeling from sad windowsills and empty porches,
Waiting for someone, anyone,
Who remembers the warmth an iron skillet brings.

Nancy Jane Earnest of Elizabethton, Tennessee, is an artist, musician, and writer whose work has appeared in *Now and Then* and the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* as well as several local and regional publications.

CHEROKEE STRAWBERRY BREAD
GA-DU TSA-LA-GI A NI

Pamela Courtney

Visit a Cherokee home and look somewhere for strawberries, whether it's in the curtain design, accessories, or an extra jar of strawberry jam sitting on the shelf. Because of the Strawberry Story handed down by our ancestors, a Cherokee wife will have strawberries somewhere in her kitchen.

The story of strawberries and marriage is more valued even than recipes. Long ago, in the mountains, a Cherokee man and woman had a disagreement. He was angry because she was picking flowers and not preparing the meal. She was angry because of his hurtful words, and she left their cabin. He called to her, but she didn't look back.

The man asked the Creator/Sun to help him. Raspberries sprang up, but the woman ignored them. The same happened with huckleberries and blackberries. Finally strawberries appeared. They glowed like fire in the grass. She stopped and knelt down to this low-growing plant and began to eat the sweet fruit, thinking she should take some to her husband. This gave him time to catch up to her, and she heard his voice. They forgave each other and returned home. Today, when the Cherokee people eat strawberries, they are reminded to be as respectful and loving as the strawberry is sweet.

The recipe for Strawberry Bread has been changed over time, with flour replacing cornmeal. I have modified it, though, using half flour and half cornmeal to preserve the original flavor of the bread and to give it a heartier taste.

At Summer Wolf Farm, where I live in Greene County, Tennessee, we grow our own strawberries and freeze them for the off-season. Eggs in this recipe are double-yolk brown eggs from our hens. We also churn our own fresh butter, which is really tasty with the bread.

Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

RECIPE

2 ½ cups fresh strawberries (or two 10-ounce packages frozen strawberries in syrup, thawed and undrained, or two cans strawberries in syrup)
4 brown eggs
1 ½ cups oil
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
1 ½ cups cornmeal
2 cups raw sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon baking soda
Pinch of salt

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees or heat a woodstove to medium heat. Mix strawberries in a small bowl. Combine eggs and oil. Sift remaining ingredients into a large bowl. Make a well in the center. Pour in the eggs, strawberries, and oil. Blend well, using a wooden spoon.

Pour into a cast-iron pot or loaf pan and bake until a broom straw comes out clean—anywhere from 50 minutes to an hour and 10 minutes. Let the bread sit overnight.

Pamela Courtney is a graduate student at East Tennessee State University and has a passion for restoration and preservation of log homes. She lived in Africa and Europe for many years and has traveled in over fifty countries but is deeply connected to her Appalachian roots, both Cherokee and European. She resides, with her family, in a hand-hewn log home in northern Greene County, Tennessee, where she grows heritage apples.

BETTING THE FARM

Amanda Rigell

Nestled into rolling pastureland and bordered by a rollicking creek, the Rural Resources demonstration farm in Greeneville, Tennessee, houses the offices of its staff; a small menagerie of cows, chickens, rabbits, and cats; and a little red school bus known as the Mobile Market. In the spring, every square inch of the farm hums with life, from the vegetable and flower gardens flanking the driveway to worm boxes where red wigglers are hard at work turning scraps into rich compost.

Displayed prominently on the farm's tallest barn is a quilt square, part of the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council's quilt trail. Constructed and painted by artists and artisans from Greeneville, the square is a replica of a quilt made by Lizzie Dobson in the 1900s.

Rural Resources began in 1992 when Watt and Larry Childress, Dobson's great-grandchildren and owners of the farm, looked for a way to use the land meaningfully and sustainably. "In order for them to save this farm, it was going to require them to learn a lot about sustainable agriculture," says Sally Causey, executive director of Rural Resources. "They figured maybe there were other people who would want to learn it with them. So they created Rural Resources to have a mechanism for both sustainable agriculture and local food production to be promoted."

It was originally called the Natural Farm Classroom, and it offered children from Greene County the opportunity to garden, milk goats, and spend time in the woods. Early projects outside the farm school were a local farmers' market, professional development programs for teachers, and school gardens. In 1993, the organization became a chartered non-profit.

Sixteen years later, Rural Resources works to build a local food system and establish community food security. Projects include the Greeneville Farmers' Market, children's gardens in the schools, sustainable agriculture training for teenagers, a summer-season Farm Day Camp, and a farmer-supplied Mobile Market.

"We're in a global food crisis," Causey says. "Food prices are soaring. Even in our own county, between a quarter and a third of our community lives in poverty and has limited access to healthy food. We want to create a local food system and build community food security by using our best collective assets of farmland, farmers' knowledge, and our community traditions of hard work, practicality, and generosity."

It's working. Rural Resources, locally funded by members and community partners, has received the attention of federal and international organizations.

Photo courtesy Rural Resources Archives.

A grant from the United States Department of Agriculture supports school gardening and the Mobile Market, and a Heifer International grant funds the Farm and Food Training program for teens.

Part of the Rural Resources strategy is to help the youngest children in the community understand that their food comes from the ground, not a grocer's shelf. With over half the students in Greene County receiving free or reduced-price school lunches, access to gardening education opens new doors to healthy eating and self-reliance.

Every summer, Rural Resources hosts Farm Day Camp, teaching children from all over the county to milk a cow, study a stream, garden, and prepare garden-fresh food. It's a program that has remained virtually unchanged since the Natural Farm Classroom's inception in 1992.

School gardens are maintained at three elementary schools, Greeneville Middle School, and the Boys and Girls Club. Children grow vegetables and flowers from seeds and use their garden harvest in cooking lessons. One first-grade gardening champion explains, "What can I say? I am just a radish guy."

The organization's impact on families reaches beyond the schoolyard and into neighborhoods with the Mobile Market, a converted school bus that delivers farm-fresh produce all over Greeneville. It began with a USDA grant in 2005, when a friend suggested to Causey that she put the Farmers' Market on wheels, thereby making fresh produce more accessible to residents who can't shop at the Farmers' Market in town because of infirmity or lack of transportation. The Mobile Market receives all of its produce from thirty local farmers, many of them using organic techniques. A mobile demonstration kitchen showcases recipes using fresh produce.

The market now travels through ten neighborhoods each week. Rhonda Hensley, its coordinator, says, "This particular lady we visit, her family tells me that if it wasn't for the Mobile Market, their mother wouldn't eat at all. She always buys tomatoes and tells me how much she appreciates it."

Hensley can see an impact on children as well. "In one of our neighborhoods, the children come running when we pull in, and some are dragging their mothers with them. One day we had seventeen kids waiting on us for a taste of fruit."

A new local growing group is now providing produce for the Mobile Market. A team of teenagers in the Farm and Food Training program at Rural Resources, working under the moniker The Soul Food Café, sells produce from their garden and greenhouse to the market. The program teaches farming, food preparation, and livestock care to local middle- and high-school students. Thirty-one teens work in four business teams. Each develops its own business plan with mentor and program coordinator Debbie Strickland, local business owners and advisors, and with the blessing of the Rural Resources board of directors.

The teens in the Farm and Food Training program find benefits beyond learning how to use the land sustainably, Strickland says. "Someone has taken the time with them and given them a chance to find themselves. They have been given the opportunity to experience a part of life that is becoming an old American tradition."

In 2008, Rural Resources and seventeen other community organizations formed a Food Security Task Force and received a Harry Chapin Self-Reliance Award for innovation and creativity in fighting hunger. Causey believes the increasing emphasis on community food security is the most significant change in the organization during its fifteen years. "Meeting kids and understanding their circumstances really got us on the food security track, which led to our Farm and Food Training and our Mobile Market, two really important pieces of what we do."

As rural Appalachia and the nation face financial crises, Rural Resources focuses again on the farm, betting that the time-honored but often-forgotten traditions of past generations—self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and meals directly from the land around us—will teach, feed, and heal the generations to come. ❖

Amanda Rigell, an East Tennessee native, is a teacher, writer, and musician living in Johnson City, Tennessee.

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

Sarah Thomas

The local, seasonal food rage is sweeping the nation and has made its way into the heart of Appalachia. In 2008 Kathleen Zelman cited eating locally as one of the biggest food trends of the year, and the Food Channel's top ten trends for 2009 included "an increase in eating locally, both at home and in restaurants that buy from local farmers."

Books such as Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* have been best sellers, educating consumers about local, national, and global food systems. Farmers' markets abound, and local, organic meats and produce are available even in chain grocery stores.

The irony of the "buy local" trend reaching states like West Virginia is that rural Appalachia has a long tradition of enjoying "local" food through sheer necessity—a tradition that has become much less prevalent in recent decades. From poke sallet in the spring to greasy beans in the summer to walnuts in the fall and then a winter hog-killing, food had to be local and seasonal, and it also required a lot of hard work. As a result, when convenience foods began appearing, they were enthusiastically embraced.

According to a study about changing Appalachian foodways published by The Ohio State University in January 2000, "Participants are also using convenience foods and mixes rather than making things from scratch. Reasons for these changes were due to taste, time to prepare, acquisition of modern equipment, more money to purchase foods, and a desire to eat different foods than were eaten during childhood." The study also indicated that while many of those surveyed had never eaten in restaurants as children, almost all do now with only one percent saying they never eat out.

But the local food trend is cycling around, and this time it's by choice, guided by organizations such as the Collaborative for the 21st Century Appalachia, founded by Dr. Allen Arnold in May of 2005.

"So central to our lives, yet so frequently taken for granted, food and the act of preparing it are often swept aside from our consciousness in the name of convenience, expediency, and economy," said Arnold.

At the first meeting of the collaborative, the board elected Dale Hawkins as chair. Executive Chef at Stonewall Resort in Roanoke, West Virginia, he has been spreading the gospel of local food ever since, using his culinary education and skills to revive a tradition that has lost a lot of ground to instant potatoes and cream of mushroom soup. The organization encourages the use of local foods by connecting Appalachian farmers with chefs while supporting small farms and boosting regional tourism.

"My guess is that interest in buy-local will only increase here in West Virginia, and that is one of the main reasons why we started the collaborative," said Hawkins. "In fact, there may be more interest around us right now than we first realized."

Eighty-six percent of people surveyed by Hawkins indicated they buy locally-grown produce for their own home use, while fifty-seven percent

Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

said they are more likely to choose a restaurant menu that features foods grown locally.

Arnold sees the collaborative as a means of developing a world-recognized regional cuisine that employs indigenous ingredients as well as traditional cookware. The collaborative's signature event, an annual Cast Iron Cook-Off, showcases the best of the state's culinary talent each January.

"We're really heavily involved in culinary and cultural tourism," says Arnold. "It isn't merely a matter of going back to what was."

Hawkins has been pivotal in that effort. Stillwaters, his signature restaurant at Stonewall Resort, features what has been dubbed "New Appalachian" cuisine. The menu focuses on world and regional dishes fused with local ingredients and cooking techniques. The dinner menu includes such items as an appetizer strudel with wild mushrooms and local goat cheese from Firefly Farm in nearby Bittinger, Maryland.

A note at the bottom of the menu proclaims, "Stonewall Resort supports our local farmers—those whose products are grown ethically and responsibly with the environment and especially your health in mind."

Concludes Arnold, "What we're really trying to do, in the same way South Carolina and the Lowcountry have so successfully done, is create national recognition for a regional cuisine." ❖

A native of French Creek, West Virginia, Sarah Thomas now lives in Asheville, North Carolina. She is the director of development and public relations for Presbyterian Home for Children in Black Mountain.

RAMP TALK

Michael Joslin

Foraging for wild edibles has been an Appalachian tradition for thousands of years, since the days of the early Native Americans. Hunting and gathering have fed many generations of human occupants of the mountains, providing a variety of abundant, healthful foods.

One of the earliest spring greens the Indians sought and enjoyed were ramps, Appalachian wild leeks. For the white pioneers who followed the natives, isolation from markets and difficulty in preserving vegetables over winter sent folks into the woods to gather a supply of fresh greens when snows receded. Later, both the monetary poverty of the mountain farmers and the natural wealth of the region encouraged them to follow their forebears' ways of resorting to steep coves instead of grocery stores.

Today, what was a quaint tradition has become fashionable, as foraging is touted as an ethical and healthful alternative to supermarkets. Internet sites promote ramps, for ten dollars and fifty cents a pound, as healthful and tasty, and books praise both the ethics of foraging and the flavor and nutrition of the plants. Gourmet chefs compete with New Age philosophers to obtain the wild plant.

I'm not used to being in the forefront of fashion. I'm not sure if my annual ramp forays are atavistic

Freshly dug ramps from the mountains of western North Carolina. Photo courtesy Michael Joslin.

or cutting edge. The ramps taste as good as they have for the past twenty-five years, and the exercise and scenery are as refreshing as ever. But now I find myself practicing an art that is highly praised in a national best seller.

In his book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan explores a problem we all face: "When you can eat just about anything nature has to offer, deciding what you should eat will inevitably stir anxiety, especially when some of the potential foods on offer are liable to sicken or kill you."

Anxiety is not a problem for me as I gather ramps in the high mountains. In fact, the excursion of climbing steep slopes, striding along wooded ridges, and descending into rich coves relieves the pressures of modern civilization. I get cardiovascular exercise as my heart rate climbs as quickly as I do. My leg muscles work equally as hard as my heart, and my senses sharpen as I search for signs of ramps.

But more importantly, foraging reminds me of the essential facts of life. Our ancestors survived for millennia without supermarkets and superstores. I don't need a new car, or new clothes, or the latest electronic device to succeed in my task. As Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, "Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes." If he were writing today, he would add "or a new cell phone or digital organizer." All I need is knowledge enough to determine what I want and how to find it and strength enough to carry me to the ramp patch and back. I need a knife to cut a digging stick and something to contain my harvest. A bandana will do.

Nature nurtures as well as tests and can be unstinting in her rewards, not the least of which is the restorative beauty of the forest. From tall hardwoods stretching branches high above me to tiny lichens and mosses which brighten my day with rich colors even during the drab season, woodlands bring as much pleasure as the finest art gallery or the latest high-definition television.

Then the culinary rewards of the search await. Ramps taste good. Whether eaten raw with bread and cheese or on a sandwich, or cooked with eggs, potatoes, meat, or simply roasted by themselves, they delight my palate with their wild taste. I eat them from late winter through spring.

In addition to providing gustatory pleasure, ramps are remarkably healthful. A good source of the powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, vitamin C, they also contain prostaglandin A1, a fatty acid therapeutic in the treatment of hypertension. In addition, the wild leeks stimulate the production of high-intensity lipoproteins which protect the cardiovascular system by reducing cholesterol.

Another issue Pollan raises in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is the harm that much of modern agriculture is doing to our planet: "What's at stake in our eating choices is not only our own and our children's health, but the health of the environment that sustains life on earth." Herbicides, insecticides, hormones, and artificial fertilizers poison the soils and waters of Earth, threatening the existence of the burgeoning population they helped create.

In the case of ramps, nature provides all the nurture. The annual fall of leaves in the autumn creates rich fertilizer, and the great diversity of our Southern Appalachian woodlands prevents the kind of industrial monoculture in nature that leads to both disease and insect explosions in the agricultural world. Ramps follow the seasonal cycle of dormancy, growth, flowering, seed development, die-back, and dormancy, thus ensuring a continuing crop.

The only environmental worry or ethical consideration I have when gathering ramps is the basic decision not to over-harvest any one site. Some of my ramp sites have disappeared, destroyed by development and logging. Where timber harvests have ravaged beds, nature and time will restore them. Where development has turned a mountain cove into

Cleaned ramps. Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

a condominium complex, ramps are gone forever. But foragers did not create either of these problems, and in the case of logging, judicious planting of ramp seed heads can hasten the plant's return.

In late February or early March, ramps in the high mountains have just begun to poke their green shoots through the rich woodland soil. In some places, the golden seed heads from the previous year are the only signs of the beds. Yet within a month, flowing green carpets will proclaim the beginning of another cycle.

All winter I look forward to the first deep thaw to gather a mess of early ramps. My only dilemma is deciding how to prepare the bulbs when I return home.

Folklore has tarnished the reputation of this simple plant, emphasizing the startling pungency of raw ramps and the powerful aroma that rises from them. Schoolmarms for generations banished from their classrooms students whose breath reeked of raw ramps.

Wild leeks wrapped in bread and butter make a simple meal but an offensive one for the fastidious. However, cooking tames the fiery taste and penetrating scent, rendering ramps fit for any setting.

A Cherokee introduced me to ramps many years ago by fixing a traditional meal of ramps and scrambled eggs. After he led me into a high cove still blanketed with snow where we dug a pillow sack full of young ramps, he gathered fresh brown eggs from his chicken coop. He whipped up about a dozen in a large bowl, then set it aside as he chopped ramp bulbs into small pieces and threw them with a hunk of butter into a well-seasoned cast-iron pan. When the white bulbs clarified, he poured the beaten eggs into the pan and scrambled them lightly.

As we ate, he warned me to be careful because the yellow streak running up the middle of the ramps contained opium and would make me sleepy. While my head did begin to nod after the meal, I attributed it to the half-dozen eggs and ramps consumed after a long morning hike.

Another dish familiar to mountain folks is fried ramps and potatoes. I prepare it to accompany almost any main course. After mincing the potatoes and ramps, I fry them in a cast-iron skillet with butter or olive oil, a little black pepper, or a finely chopped cayenne pepper.

One of my favorite ramp dishes is also the most filling—ramp soup. For friends who insist they don't eat ramps, I call the dish by its French name—*vichyssoise*. Ramps, potatoes, and fresh cream create a delectable concoction. While in fancy restaurants the soup is usually served cold, on a chilly spring evening I prefer it piping hot.

Using equal portions of each, I slice the white bulbs of ramps into small sections and chop peeled potatoes into cubes. I soften the ramps in a pan with enough butter to cover them, then stir in the potatoes, salt, and pepper, pour in enough water to cover, and boil for thirty to forty minutes.

I puree the cooked potatoes and ramps in a blender, return them to the pan, and mix in plenty of cream before bringing the mixture to a boil again while stirring frequently. Because some folks who will eat vichyssoise will not touch ramp soup, I adjust my vocabulary accordingly.

Another dish I present either under its French name or its country one—*poireaux au gratin* or ramps with cheese. I trim the roots and green leaves from the ramps, rinse the bulbs, and blanch them for about five minutes in plenty of boiling, salted water. After draining the leeks, I clarify them slowly in butter and place them in a baking dish. I cover them with freshly grated cheddar or Parmesan cheese and melted butter and brown the dish in a hot oven.

But the ramp meal I cherish the most is one that requires no kitchen or stove or recipe. Carrying a bag

Richard Waldrop with a fistful of ramps right out of the ground, near the Appalachian Trail. Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

lunch of steak sandwiches, my son Mitchell and I hike to Little Rock Knob along the Appalachian Trail from our house on Greasy Creek in the North Carolina mountains. As we approach the knob, we stop along the trail to dig a bunch of ramps. I slice the roots from the bulbs, rinse the plants with water from our canteen, and place three or four ramps on each of our sandwiches. Sitting high above the valley on a rocky outcrop, looking across to Ripshin Ridge, we eat our meal. The scream of a soaring hawk echoes from a distant time when a darker native of the mountains enjoyed a similar meal of venison and ramps with his son as they, too, savored the bounty of their home. ❖

Michael Joslin lives with his wife, Pam, on a farm in the Buladean community of Mitchell County, North Carolina. He is a professor at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina.

AN UNLIKELY SOURCE OF FLOUR

Renee McNeely

It's common knowledge that corn was fundamental to the diets of the Native Americans, who shared this information with the new colonists. But what if a drought or fire destroyed this staple? How could Native Americans avoid starvation? To survive, the native inhabitants and early settlers of the Appalachian region had to know how to use what the land could bountifully provide.

One of the most easily identifiable plants of Appalachia is the Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), a perennial that grows in many woodlands of the Southeast. Thomas Hemmerly, in his book *Appalachian Wildflowers*, describes the plant as having a thick flowering stalk, the spadix, which is the "Jack" part, surrounded by a cylindrical spathe, forming the "pulpit." With one to two compound leaves, each producing three leaflets, the Jack-in-the-Pulpit reaches twelve to eighteen inches in height and is found in rich, shaded woodlands.

Based on physical observation alone, one would never suspect that this plant could be a food source. However, the Native Americans discovered a use for the tap roots or corm. It's the corm, similar to a tuber that lies just below the surface, that served to supplement diets during lean times. A little-known use of the plant is explained by Leonard Adkins in *Wildflowers of the Appalachian Trail*: "After putting the plant's roots through a rather elaborate cooking process, Native Americans pounded them into powder to be used as a type of flour, hence Jack-in-the-Pulpit's other name is Indian Turnip."

Starch was an important part of the diets of Native Americans, and they discovered it was a chief component of the Jack-in-the-Pulpit tap root. The complex process of turning the tap root into flour must have involved a great deal of trial and error, for if the method isn't accurately followed, the results prove very unpleasant as the tap roots are extremely acidic, bitter, and will produce painful blisters and severe stomach problems. The roots had to be harvested in the spring and then roasted or dried for approximately six months before they could be ingested. After the drying time, the roots were peeled and ground into flour for bread.

According to the Web site promoting Wildwood Park in Radford, Virginia, "Eating the plant would not have been worth the trouble, except in starvation years."

This "Indian Turnip" is but one example of how Native Americans, often faced with lean times, learned to find nourishment in some of nature's most obscure places. ❖

Renee Hart McNeely became acquainted with the Jack-in-the-Pulpit on walks in the woods with her grandfather. She recruits physicians for the Department of Internal Medicine at East Tennessee State University's James H. Quillen College of Medicine.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit. Photo courtesy Timothy McDowell.

KITCHEN TABLE

Jessie van Eerden

I caught sight—when it was barely dawn, before I went to the third grade or knew my first love—sight of my mother at the table where she'd put up peaches. The wide-mouthed Mason jars had sealed overnight, all the peach halves floating up snug to the mouth, as though keeping warm together, the thick syrup heavy at the bottom. The table was bowed in the middle, under the weight of half a dozen rows of four quarts each, like it might have been an altar, with the first fruits offered in quart jars. At the other end of the table, the breeze that came in the open screen door lifted the corner of a linen towel, an easy lid for rolls rising. I smelled the yeast and the smear of butter she had given the pan. There were nicks on the table from a game of jacks, scores from a knife that had cut without a cutting board, but I couldn't see the marks for the dough and the peaches. She sat there on the bench at the table, in the path of the radio and in the path of the stove light, with neither one on.

And I caught this sight the summer I had a fervor, having been to church camp in the mountains of West Virginia and lit with the fire of the newly saved. That morning I awoke in the early dark, like they'd taught me, to read from John's Revelation in the Bible, in chapter two, where the Son of Man who holds the seven stars in his right hand tells John to write a letter to the church in Ephesus—the Son says, tell them that I know their deeds and their toil, that it's true they never grow weary in their work, but that I have this against them: They have left their first love, their love has died like a locust does, the way it leaves its husk clinging to the side of a shed but leaves no tinny song, no whine. I copied out verse four in my diary with a sleeping kitten on the cover, the verse about the first love, thinking it was an important verse, though I didn't understand it, and maybe I'd memorize it. Then I came down the stairs and turned the corner to the kitchen and saw her there, in jeans and a tank top—because it was hot even in morning—the dough pooching up the linen towel in small mounds, and those half-moon peaches.

She sat facing the screen door, working with the smoky light that the dawn is. I say working, even though she was still, because as I went closer I saw a small, cleared space at the center of the table, between the canned peaches and the bread dough, and I saw that she was writing something there on a piece of loose-leaf paper. I smelled yeast and summer and wet morning air swelling the porch boards, and she sat there just like regular but so still—the words of John's Revelation a low flame in me—and she looked alone

Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

but in love, if love is what stills you at a sagging table of an altar, or at a makeshift writing desk still sticky with the over spilling syrup of peaches. It was before the day began, and she might have been starting a letter, saying: Go to your first love, remember from where you have fallen, don't let your love die out. I might have felt like I was intruding, had one of the jars of peaches not been opened. Had there not been two halves quartered for my little mouth, in a saucer with a spoon, waiting. ❖

Jessie van Eerden's work has appeared in Houghton Mifflin's *Best American Spiritual Writing 2006*, *Oxford American*, and other publications. She holds a master of fine arts in nonfiction writing from the University of Iowa.

PEAR SALAD FOR CHRISTMAS

Margaret Carr

Green and red for Christmas. Sounds pretty ordinary until you learn the red and green is food and the food turns out to be pears. Salvaged pears became a special treat from my mother to her girls at Christmas time. Lydia Maude Garland Shipley was of the generation that entered young adulthood during the Great Depression—the generation that learned to save everything and waste nothing.

When my mother was a teenager, she left home and "stayed with" a family to care for two young children whose parents were fortunate enough to have jobs. She did not enter "public works" until she was in her twenties. She eventually worked on the production line at North American Rayon in Elizabethton, Tennessee; made RDX, a military explosive, at Holston Ordnance in Kingsport; and baked pies in Jess Larkin's bakery in Elizabethton. She continued to work after getting married but fifteen years later became a stay-at-home mom, at age forty-two. Her role in the household was generally what we would term "traditional," as she was responsible for managing the household cooking, cleaning, finances, and maintenance while raising my sister and me.

This recipe, like most of what she prepared, has never been written down. My mother was the type to salvage any foodstuffs she could preserve. I can only guess where she acquired the pears; they probably came from my cousins' farm in Watauga. The trees stood in the middle of a cow pasture, and the herd seemed to object to losing their treats to us.

My mother canned in late summer and early autumn, spending all day in the hot kitchen with no air-conditioning, sterilizing lids and jars and preparing the fruit. She never owned a pressure

Mary and Margaret Shipley, Christmas 1964. Photo courtesy Margaret Carr.

canner. Everything was done by the hot water bath method. The steam made the heat and humidity even worse in the kitchen. By the end of the day, however, the counter was filled with jars of party-colored fruit in sweet syrup. When the jars cooled and the seals were checked, they were transported to the basement.

When the pears were canned, my mother would put food coloring in the jars—red or green—so the pears would be pretty for Christmas. They might have tasted just as good to us regardless, but the extra effort created a holiday tradition and made an ordinary dish magical.

Pear salad was presented on a separate plate, as a salad course, using only five ingredients: leaf lettuce, pears, cottage cheese, mayonnaise, and grated cheddar cheese. Two or three pear halves were placed on top of the lettuce, with dollops each of cottage cheese and mayonnaise, topped with the cheese. The sweetness of the syrup mixed well with the tangy mayonnaise and the sharp cheddar. When we discovered Miracle Whip, we substituted it for mayonnaise.

We rarely had Pear Salad at times other than Christmas, but the remaining jars of fruit were usually eaten at some point in the year, with cottage cheese or as a side dish on their own. My sister and I had no idea that the pears were essentially salvaged.

Of the many dishes served at the Christmas table—the ham or turkey, vegetables, rolls, and desserts—this one remains the most memorable. ❖

Margaret Carr, a native of Carter County, Tennessee, submitted this story as part of an heirloom recipe assignment in the "Appalachian Foodways" course at East Tennessee State University.

WHAT THE GROUNDHOG KNOWS: CITY GIRL MEETS HORSERADISH

Margaret Nava

Back in the 1970s, when men still wore bib overalls and women stuck flowers in their hair, my husband and I gave up city life and set out to live a "back-to-nature" lifestyle.

We bought a small farm deep in the hollows of West Virginia, raised some goats and chickens, and planted tomatoes, potatoes, corn, and horseradish. Being total greenhorns, though, we failed to take into consideration all the rabbits and groundhogs. That first season they ate everything they could get their paws, claws, or fangs into. Everything, that is, except the horseradish.

Not knowing exactly what to do with the strange-looking plant, I left it in the ground until the following

Illustration by Samuel Crowe.

spring when one of my neighbors mentioned it would make a great addition to the Easter dinner our church was planning. Following a recipe I obtained from the county extension service, I pulled several long roots from the ground, washed, peeled, and chopped them, and put them into my electric blender. Adding a little vinegar and a dash of salt, I set the blender on "grate" and stood back while the machine did its job.

Within minutes, the leggy root turned into a thick, lily-white gruel. I was curious to see if it tasted anything like the horseradish I'd had in big city delis, so I removed the top of the blender and took a whiff.

When horseradish meets the heat of a whirling blender blade, I discovered, toxic fumes result. My sinuses shut down, my eyelids clamped shut, and my lungs refused to take in air. At that moment, I realized why the groundhogs and rabbits never touched the noxious plant.

I groped my way to the phone and grabbed the receiver. We shared the phone line with two other families in the hollow, and my neighbors Katy and Sharon were deep in discussion about that morning's episode of their favorite soap opera. I tried to say I needed help, but all I could do was gasp for breath. Katy must have thought one of her kids was playing tricks. "J.R., if you're trying to get my goat, you're doing a good job of it."

I gasped again.

"You'd better get off this phone, young man. If your father finds out what you've been up to, there'll be hell to pay."

I managed to squeak out a feeble "help" and the woman quickly backed off.

"Maggie? Is that you?"

"Yes." My voice sounded like air escaping from a punctured balloon, and my eyes felt like someone had zapped them with a glue gun.

"What's wrong, honey? You need help?"

"Yes," I whimpered.

Within minutes, a battered pickup screeched into our gravel driveway. Katy and Sharon jumped out, left both doors open, and raced for the house. I was sitting in the middle of the kitchen floor with my head on my knees and my hands on the back of my neck.

Katy came flying into the house with her deer-hunting rifle loaded and ready. "Where is he?" she roared.

I raised my head. My nose was running, my eyes were tearing, and I was starting to get the worst headache I had ever experienced. Even so, I managed to squeeze out a pathetic "Who?"

"The varmint who broke in," answered Sharon.

When they had realized it was me on the phone, they assumed I was whispering because someone, or something, had gotten into my house.

"Let's get you fixed up," laughed Katy, "then we'll show you the right way to make horseradish."

The whole fiasco became the focus of the church dinner, but that was okay because it showed the church members the Big City Girl could make mistakes just like them. And even though it's been almost thirty years since that fretful day, every time I make horseradish, Katy's words come back to me: "Never, ever underestimate the lowly horseradish." ❖

Margaret Nava, a retired West Virginia goat farmer, now lives and writes in New Mexico.

POKE

R. T. Smith

Beyond the garden but near the bear path,
the poke patch volunteers all summer,
its young leaves good for mumps, joints
and tonsils if you boil them thrice,
and tossed with onion and bacon grease
they make a fine salad, a corn bread wedge
on the side with sweet tea, but some
say it's a witch weed, and when the leaves
wilt and ghost flowers go to berries
wine-dark and bright, you can summon
an evil to bring on vomit, sweats, spasm
and flux, even death, so don't be fooled
by jays and sparrows who can eat
the gems without harm, as the seeds pass
right through them without releasing
poison's voice. Algonquians who named
this wild thing puccoon used the juice
to paint their horses and swallowed
raw just a shred to sharpen their spirits
and eyes before they went on a raid,
so once a year, around the June solstice
I'll boil the feathery leaves just twice,
mix a salad, touch my tongue with green
and grease, get my heart ready to ride.

R. T. Smith's collections *Messenger* (LSU, 2001) and *Outlaw Style* (Arkansas, 2007) both received the Library of Virginia Poetry Book of the Year Award. His work has appeared recently in *Atlantic Monthly*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Best American Poetry*, and *The Pushcart Prize Anthology*. He edits *Shenandoah*, for which he recently received the Virginia Governor's Award for the Arts.

THE HENDERSON COUNTY CURB MARKET AT EIGHTY-FIVE

Elizabeth Engelhardt

My strongest memory of the Henderson County Curb Market as a child in the 1970s is the slightly musty smell of birds' nests and dried gourds. Located on Church Street in a low-slung, long brick building one block off Main Street in Hendersonville, North Carolina, the market was always shaded and cooler than the summer's heat. My mother was there for fresh spring greens and strawberries, later summer tomatoes and corn, and whatever half-runner beans were in season. But to get them, we had to arrive before nine. For the most part, we passed by without lingering over the rag rugs or hand-carved walking canes, but every once in a while, a pound cake or bouquet of wildflowers made its way into our basket.

In those days, the Curb Market seemed a natural and ordinary part of life. Old men wore their overalls and tiny women wore gingham dresses without irony. These were not costumes for tourists; they were what farmers wore while loading their trucks in the early mornings to fill their tables at the market. I suppose I dimly knew that not every town in the United States had a curb market. Or at least I knew the larger city of Asheville had the regional farmers' market and the garden produce on my grandmother's table in smaller Brevard came from my uncle's own garden.

It was not until I was much older that I realized Hendersonville's Curb Market was a destination, simultaneously a throwback to a little-remembered agricultural movement from the turn of the century and a thoroughly contemporary way of celebrating town and county identity in western North Carolina.

Tucked into the first floor of a former bank building on Main Street today is Henderson County's Historical Society. There, carefully documented, is the town's history as a market site. Its traditions of boarding houses, general stores, and commerce stand in contrast to other communities in the area: more mercantile than resort communities like nearby Flat Rock; less urbane than architects' playgrounds like Asheville. At the Historical Society you can trace

Photo courtesy Robert R. Delwiche.

the Curb Market's relation to the market town in newspaper clipping files, pages of the *Heritage of Henderson County*, and in the memories of volunteers. Yet not all of the Curb Market's past spreads out in front of you in the official corridors of memory.

During the fiftieth anniversary of the market in the 1970s, Henderson County's preeminent memory-keeper, Frank L. FitzSimons, narrated the civic history of the market. The author of three volumes of *From the Banks of the Oklawaha* (as well as dairyman, football coach, and banker), FitzSimons recalled writing a letter to the newspaper, arguing that the county needed a market like the European ones he observed during World War I. The editor of the newspaper, Noah Hollowell, joined in. Working with "Mr. Arnold, the county farm agent and the home demonstration agent, whose name I have forgotten," the city men persuaded seven farm families to create the first market. (FitzSimons uses this curious phrasing that will prove important in the *Heritage of Henderson County*.) As they formally organized, the local newspaper reported on May 20, 1925, that the Curb Market's "governing board will consist of at least three representatives from the farmers. They will ask for one from the Merchants Association, one from the Chamber of Commerce, one from the city commissioners and one from the Woman's Club to help make regulations for conducting the market in a way that it will prove attractive to the producers as well as the buyers and objectionable to no one."

First occurring in 1924 and 1925 on Main Street under donated buggy umbrellas, the market eliminated the need for farmers to travel the streets of town peddling at individuals' doors. Instead, city buyers came to the sellers.

Newspaper articles from the early days debate whether the market would eliminate or promote the practice of peddling. By the time of a 1930s newspaper advertisement, elimination had triumphed: "The Curb Market has in a large way solved the problem of peddling from house to house by farmers." Soon after, businesses donated materials for a more permanent location, and farmers provided the labor.

The Curb Market moved to a wooden building on King Street, and, later, to the even more prominent location, the current brick building on Church. Along the way, the market controlled its size, which increased the status of its tables. As a June 28, 1978, article in the *Times-News* argued, "For most of its life, membership in the Market has been restricted by space considerations and it might be said that a 'seat' on the Curb approaches the value and prestige of a 'seat' on the nation's major stock exchanges, with some of the originals currently followed by their grandchildren." Indeed, families pass membership in the Curb Market from generation to generation. Participation is strictly limited and highly coveted. As early as the mid-1930s, the market had expanded to the same Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday schedule it keeps today.

A second way to tell the story of the Curb Market hides in plain sight in FitzSimons' account. The same advertisement that proclaimed the death of peddling in the county gives a hint of the market's other history: "The market had its beginning 12 years ago when a number of farmers, mostly farm women, through the co-operation of the county farm agent and home agent, united their efforts to make a better retail outlet for produce."

It is the story of the home demonstration agent whose name FitzSimons has forgotten, the "mostly farm women" who worked to create the retail outlet, and the representatives from the Woman's Club who served on the original board—and it is the story of the women who have been behind the scenes of the market, managing its daily operations for the eighty-five years of its existence. Both stories hold kernels of truth. Given the social and cultural mores of the 1920s, the Curb Market needed the newspaperman

Photo courtesy Robert R. Delwiche.

and the city council member. It needed the commitment and the labor of male farmers to park their buggies and cars and let the city buyers come to them rather than peddle to each door. Still, most of the buyers—who made purchases and ran the kitchens of boarding houses and homes in town—and most of the sellers—who did the daily work of staffing the curb market tables every time it convened—were women, and the Curb Market could not exist without them.

In the 1920s in the rest of North Carolina, a coalition of farm women and the new home demonstration agents was founding farmers' markets everywhere. Headquartered at North Carolina State University, the women's branch of extension was run by Jane McKimmon, whose name is remembered today on state buildings and conference centers. When she wrote her memoir in 1945 of how 4-H and extension work evolved from its beginnings in girls' canning clubs to its eventual statewide network of women and girls, she titled it *When We're Green We Grow*. McKimmon's story is one of community—her autobiography is not "I" but "we" throughout. You can see that emphasis when she talks about the curb market movement her extension women started in the state. McKimmon focuses on the social aspects of the movement: how 4-H girls needed a place to sell their wares; how city and farm women could learn from each other if given the chance; how money went back to families when earned in the community.

McKimmon describes the interaction country women and city women had on market day: "Friendly chats while sales are being made give both buyer and seller a clearer understanding of each other's worth." She names the Henderson County market as one of their successes, using data gathered by home demonstration agents whose names FitzSimons and the rest of us have forgotten. McKimmon documents more than $570,000 in profit made by state markets in 1945. The Henderson county market was in the second largest tier of profitable markets, the only one from the mountains to achieve such size.

Men helped found the market and have served on the board and participated in its history, but women have always done the behind-the-scenes, daily work of sustaining it. The market's only paid position has traditionally been the manager, and women have always staffed it, most staying in the post for decades. An undated *Times-News* article by Dale McGeehon from the sixty-fifth anniversary of the market even suggests the reason its story includes so many women is that "many of the farmers have died. . . . Their wives usually cannot continue the farming business but they can sew and make rugs or other items to continue selling at the market." This ability to evolve and make strengths out of challenges explains why Henderson County's Curb Market remains precious to visitors and residents alike.

Keeping a business running for eighty-five years clearly takes brains and skills, but the story of its women is not often publicly celebrated at the market. Other Henderson County residents are similarly hidden behind the market's public face. North Carolina in the 1920s was a segregated state, with distinct institutions for white versus black residents. The Curb Market's founding and patronage fell solidly on the white citizens' side in its early days. Despite a vibrant African American community (and the Latino population that used to pass through picking the local agriculture but today is stable and settled in the county), the Curb Market has not always reflected the county's diversity in its sellers. The consequence is not just academic: Henderson County is important within Appalachia because of how strongly it can counter stereotypes of the region as being all white and what inevitably follows in these bad caricatures, poor and backward.

Photo courtesy Robert R. Delwiche.

If the Curb Market is more consciously nostalgic and "old timey" today, but in a way that is more in accord with tourist expectations than with its own history—a little more kitschy and old-fashioned than a place that recognizes its own strong, organized, and business-savvy women or the diversity of its residents through time—then perhaps an opportunity is missed. What is lost? When is the market no longer for the residents of the community but only for tourists or visitors instead? How can it continue to be both?

Today the Curb Market continues every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning, although the county now has other produce stands, a couple of top-end niche grocery stores, and even a weekly farmers' market in summer.

Rather than simply being—rather than wearing overalls and gingham because that was the only thing hanging in the closet—the market's sellers celebrate twice-a-year "old timey days." More jellies, cakes, salsas, and prepared foods are sold year-round. The last two packages my mother has sent me from her trips to the market have held a bracelet and a pair of earrings, still handmade, but some distance from the apples or strawberries of my youth. The tables full of canes, dolls, and rugs have been joined by quilts, aprons, birdhouses, and gift baskets—but all remains handmade.

Nonetheless, the Henderson County Curb Market holds a little of the past and a little of the future—connecting city and county, farm and town, newly arrived and longtime residents. Going there reminds us of home—the foods, crafts, and raw materials that are native and familiar in the mountains. Going there invites us to have conversation with people whose families have set up shop for fifty years or eighty years or eighty-five. And going there puts the tastes of food, aromas of flora, images of fauna, and even the stones from which the mountains of western North Carolina are made into our baskets. Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning on Church Street in the cool relief of a low-slung brick building. ❖

A native of Hendersonville, North Carolina, Elizabeth Sanders Delwiche Engelhardt is an associate professor at the University of Texas, Austin. She is the author of *The Tangled Roots of Feminism, Environmentalism, and Appalachian Literature* (2003), a co-author of *Republic of Barbecue* (2009), and author of the forthcoming *A Mess of Greens: Southern Food and Southern Gender*. She thanks the staff of the Henderson County Historical Society and her parents, who helped out with memories for this article.

THE TAO OF CORN BREAD

Janice Barnett

These are strange times in my East Tennessee kitchen. These days of the dying memory of lard, the waning of hydrogenated oils, the rise of extra-virgin this and organic that. These days of cooking for friends not from here and not blood-related to me, while the ghosts of old mountain women look over my shoulder, wearing their lard-stained aprons and warning me not to rush headlong into new ways. Look at us. We never gave up side meat and we lived to be ninety.

I don't know about you, but I wasn't raised to sass the grannies. It was the older womenfolk in the family who taught me the mountain ways when it comes to the kitchen, and I don't want to rile them, dead or alive. No matter what the health experts and the social critics have to say about dragging a questionable culinary past along with me, I'm going to fry turnips with side meat if that's what the people at my table want, and I'm not going to call supper *dinner*. Still, there are times when I have bucked the grannies a little by falling back on the spirit rather than the letter of the kitchen laws they taught me.

Take cooking for my two best women friends, for example. Both of them prefer their meat free-range, their bread spelt, their vegetables organic, and their grease extra-virgin. The last time I fixed a meal for them, one was on an Eat Right for Your Blood Type diet, and the other was on an alkalizing diet. Figuring out who would eat what was like wading through the dietary laws in Leviticus.

The day of the big meal, I rose as early as the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, who, as the grannies always reminded me, never ate the bread of idleness. Spring snow danced about in the glare of the outdoor light and lit on the window ledge without making a sound. All was silent except for the hum of the refrigerator, interrupted every now and then by the gas furnace kicking on and off. My husband was still sleeping. Before going extra-virgin, I considered indulging in some hydrogenated fats by making us some biscuits with the butter-flavored Crisco, then decided against it. The organic spinach salad needed preparing, and the chicken marinating in the organic herbs and spices needed checking.

I shivered as a breeze drifted past the sink and a paper towel lying on the counter fluttered to the floor. A voice inside my head said, Why not fry it? You know chicken

Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

like that's not fit to eat any other way. The smell of snuff and chewing tobacco began filling the kitchen, and I knew who had arrived. They made the usual racket, all talking at the same time, trying to outdo one another: Hadn't you better put some Arsh taters on for the tater salad? No, I'd cook some sweet taters. I'd a soaked that chicken in buttermilk. Where'd you get them greens? Branch lettuce makes the best sallet this time a year. Where's your beans? You ought to a raised you some of them little greasy beans and put them up the way we used to.

I told them I wasn't serving beans. I was fixing rice with sautéed garlic and zucchini. What kind of meal's that? they asked. Who're these people you're cooking for? They from here?

I said it was my two best friends and some of their family, and no they were not from here. Aprons flapped—It felt like I'd opened a window and a windstorm was blowing through the kitchen. A whiff of cigarette smoke made its way to the sink, and I recognized one voice above the others. What kind of bread you fixing? You never have learned to make light rolls like mine, have you?

I walked to the refrigerator, took out the loaf of organic spelt bread from the health food store, and held it out, my nostrils flaring and my chin raised. The cigarette smoker sniffed. You expect my son to eat that? That sounds like something you'd feed to a hog.

I could feel the other old women crowding around me. You know how it is with blood kin. It made me feel kind of feisty even though I couldn't make out what they were saying as they whispered and argued among themselves, until one of them whispered in my ear, Honey, why don't you knock up a pone of corn bread to go with that stuff?

I reminded them it was too early to put bread on. They commenced to apron flapping again, so I snapped back that I hadn't said I wouldn't make corn bread. One of them said something about sassing back. I jerked open the stove drawer and rummaged around for an iron skillet. They snickered. We didn't say you had to do it now.

I know when I'm outnumbered. I yes Ma'amed them, and they snickered some more and began drifting back to the kitchen table, still advising and watching, dipping and chewing. Evidently some things never change even on the other side.

About an hour before my friends were to arrive, they set in again, making such a racket they drowned out the cigarette smoker still reminding me of my inadequacies as a light roll maker. Hadn't you better heat that skillet? You got any decent buttermilk? Any real butter? You ought to get your meal ground at a mill. I was already slapping my largest skillet in the oven and didn't answer, not that it mattered, the way they were wound up. While they shook their heads and argued about how much baking soda it took for decent corn bread, I dumped self-rising cornmeal and flour into a bowl and kept adding whole buttermilk, stirring until the mixture was smooth and puffy.

They laughed when I grabbed a plastic container of margarine along with a stick of butter for my usual half-and-half recipe. At least they didn't say anything about hydrogenated fats. The margarine sizzled when I ran a big dollop around the skillet's hot sides and let the rest melt in the bottom along with a half stick of the butter before adding the batter.

By the time my friends arrived, the corn bread had baked into a glorious pone with salty rivulets of margarine and butter running through its golden crust. I felt almost sadistic setting it on the dining room table beside the spelt bread. My friend on the alkalizing diet laughed when she saw what I was doing. She had brought her own chopped, raw vegetables, separated into small plastic containers. One held a whitish concoction she called a culture. As she explained how she would pour this over the vegetables, I thought I heard the cigarette smoker say something about a person who would come to your dinner table and act like that.

In a low voice, I asked my husband if he smelled cigarette smoke. He said he didn't. I asked about chewing tobacco. Snuff. He had the same answer. I noticed the teenage son of the friend on the Blood Type Diet shifting his eyes from the corn bread to his mother while her attention was on sampling a bite of the free-range beef. All of a sudden, his hand shot out like a hound stealing a meat scrap and grabbed a piece of the corn bread. With a sheepish look, his

father snatched one of the larger pieces. My friend on the alkalizing diet saw him and, with a determined set to her mouth, squared her shoulders, opened her container of raw cabbage, and dumped it onto her plate. She began opening the container of raw carrots, slumped in her chair, and, with something like a whimper, reached for the corn bread. The teenager's mother looked at her, looked down at the spelt bread on her plate, shrugged, and placed a piece of corn bread beside it.

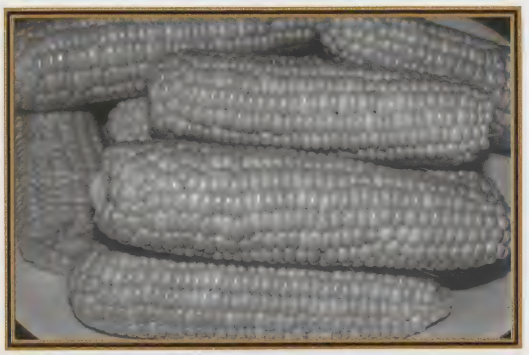
The teenager was already reaching for another piece. I took one and looked at my husband. He had that "good boy who must be polite to company and share even if there's none left for him" expression on his face. The smell of cigarette smoke began getting stronger. I grabbed the last piece of corn bread and put it on his plate.

It dawned on us that we had forgotten to ask a blessing. We sounded like the grannies all talking at the same time as we deliberated about what to do. Deciding on a few moments of silence to honor our differing ways of approaching the Divine, we bowed our heads and held hands around the table. I felt the old women watching us begin to settle down and knew they were smiling as much as they ever smiled in their hard lives. That even the cigarette smoker was giving us her blessing as we gave thanks and broke corn bread together. ❖

Janice Willis Barnett lives in Unicoi County, Tennessee, and is a contributor to "Inside Appalachia," produced by West Virginia Public Broadcasting.

PICKLING CORN: A PRIMER

Anita Shell



In my childhood, everyone in the community had a garden and depended on what they grew for a large portion of their winter food supply. Before freezers were common in Northeast Tennessee, many folks pickled their corn and beans. Pickling was less expensive than canning and didn't heat up the kitchen, and pickled goods often were more flavorful than dried ones.

In the mountains where I grew up, corn couldn't be planted until the first of May or after the threat of late frosts had passed. As a result, the plants matured during the hottest days of summer—the end of July through the first weeks of August. A crock of pickled corn, beans, or often both together could be placed in a cool cellar and left there without heating up the house. This was especially important when women canned and cooked on wood stoves in the era before air-conditioning. Pickling was also more economical because it didn't require expensive jars or lids that couldn't be reused. Pickled corn requires only three ingredients: corn, salt, and water.

All the mountain people I've interviewed about pickled corn have given specific instructions. First, the moon signs must be above the waist and the higher up on the body the better. For the last couple of batches I've made, the signs have been in the neck

Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

or head. I'm told if you fail to start your corn while the moon is in the correct sign, it will spoil rather than pickle.

The second requirement for good pickled corn I learned from my mother. When I was young, my family migrated from Tennessee to Ohio. My mother and aunt attempted to pickle corn while living near the shore of Lake Erie, but it failed to pickle. Mom said it didn't spoil, but it just didn't pickle. Naturally she had made certain the signs were right, so all she could come up with was the difference in water. At home, spring water was used, but in Ohio the water came from a well. Mom called it "limestone water."

According to my Grandma Perkins, corn is only good for roasting ears for a short time after it's ready to pick. Today much of the corn crop is frozen immediately after it is picked in order to slow the conversion of natural sugars to starch. The corn left in the garden after everyone eats their fill is used for pickling.

In order to make pickled corn, I purchased a three-gallon crock for around forty dollars. Like other things "country," the price of crocks has increased dramatically from the time when families made pickled corn or beans every season. But the crock is a great investment because the same process that results in pickled corn can also be used to make sauerkraut from cabbage. I plan to use the crock to pickle cucumbers in the same way, salting them and layering them between grape leaves, with a covering of spring water.

Pickling corn requires only a few basic tools: the crock, a large dinner plate of a size to fit inside the crock, a clean, flat rock slightly smaller than the plate, and a clean white cloth. I use part of an old white sheet, but I have seen dish towels and pillow cases serving the same purpose.

First, the corn should be shucked, the silks removed, and the corn washed thoroughly before being boiled for about twenty minutes. When the ears are cool enough to handle, place a layer (four or five ears) in the crock and salt generously, keeping in mind that the corn will be washed before it's eaten. Use several handfuls of salt per layer. Continue layering corn and salting until all the corn has been used. Cover the layers of salted corn with spring water and then place the clean white cloth on top. Place the plate over the cloth and weight it all down with the rock. It's important that the corn remain completely immersed in the water for the duration of the pickling time. Set the crock in a cool place and be patient for at least three weeks but preferably a little longer. The brine will turn a bit slimy, which is to be expected. Before serving, rinse the pickled corn well and eat it warm or cold. It won't need salt.

Some folks cut the corn off the cob and can it, but it never lasted that long in my family. Corn can be cut off the cob and pickled in the jar, but it's just better when eaten straight out of the crock and still on the cob. ❖

Anita Shell is from the Shell Creek community near Roan Mountain, Tennessee. She earned a bachelor of science degree in sociology from East Tennessee State University in 2008 and is currently pursuing a master's degree, with an emphasis in Appalachian women's studies.

COVE CREEK GRITTY BREAD

Susan Shelton

In 1888, my great-grandfather, Mitchell Barnett, and his bride Laura crossed the ridge into Roan Mountain, Tennessee, from Yancey County, North Carolina. They settled in Cove Creek, in the shadows of the balds of the Roan. To their union were born four children, the youngest being my grandfather, in 1908.

No one in my family knows the exact origin of Gritty Bread, a recipe that made use of the bounty of the garden and the pasture field. Field corn, used to feed both animals and people, was the main ingredient. It was tougher than the sweet corns of today. Grating it for Gritty Bread made it more palatable and easier to cook.

My mother, Wynona Holland, has always told me of the hard times her family experienced growing up in Roan Mountain. Many nights, cornmeal mush was the only food for supper during the winter months. But in the summer, the rich black soil of the garden yielded fresh vegetables, and there were always milk and butter from the barn. Mother vividly remembers making Gritty Bread. Her grandfather would instruct her and her middle brother to go to the edge of the woods and pick out a strong limb. While they were gone, Pappy would poke holes in a piece of tin with a nail and wrap that around the selected limb. This primitive tool would only be used once, since it couldn't be thoroughly cleaned and would easily rust.

As the years went by, my grandfather took over the grinding. The handmade tool was replaced with a "modern" steel grinder. Since he was a carpenter by trade, he constructed a special green bench and mounted the grinder on it.

I remember Gritty Bread time each year as a celebration of harvest and family. Tasks were assigned by gender and never deviated. Young men shucked the corn, women cut it off the ears, men ground it, and then it was back to the women waiting in the kitchen. Dishwashing was reserved for the young ladies among us.

As a tiny child, I would stand at my grandfather's shoulder as he ground the corn. He never used a measuring tool, only the cup of his hand. "Jist enough," he used to say. The "batter" would plop into the milk bucket waiting below, and then it was hauled away to the kitchen, where my grandmother and mother would add the magic. It could only be baked in the special black pan my grandmother had ordered made in the village of Roan Mountain. After a few minutes, the perfectly browned delight would appear on the table, accompanied only by sweet butter from our own cows. Eight or nine times this would be repeated. It was my favorite food from childhood.

My bread today is a pitiful reproduction of that glorious repast in the cove. I don't have the special pan or field corn fresh from the garden. But I do have the grinder. When my grandfather died a few years ago at age ninety-eight, my uncle seized the home place and everything in it. Once he had cleaned it out, I, as the eldest grandchild and ultimate pack

Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

rat, went through the boxes destined for the dump. There, in the bottom, lay the grinder, the source of my childhood delight. Today it is not used—stored instead in the sack my grandmother made for it, probably in the 1970s, judging by the fabric.

Although techniques and tools have changed, and many of the folks around that table are now gone, when I smell fresh corn, I am transported again to a time of churned butter and hand-washed dishes.

RECIPE

Gritty Bread of Cove Creek

5 ears corn (about 3 cups cut)
½ teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
½ cup buttermilk

Grind corn or pulverize in a blender. Add all other ingredients and blend thoroughly. Pour into a heavily greased baking pan or black iron skillet. The bread should be thin—almost two crusts with nothing in between. Bake in a hot oven, about 450 degrees, for 25 minutes or until golden brown. Serve immediately with lots of fresh butter.

A native of Elizabethton, Tennessee, Susan Shelton earned a bachelor of science degree in Spanish from East Tennessee State University in 1974. After following her husband's career path for thirty years, from coast to coast, she returned to East Tennessee to pursue a master's degree.

DOWN BY THE OLD MILL STREAM: *NOW & THEN* VISITS THREE HISTORIC MILLS

Stephen Newton

By the time Chicago songwriter and Vaudeville performer Tell Taylor wrote the words and music to "Down by the Old Mill Stream" in 1910, the St. John Milling Company in Watauga, Tennessee, had already been in business for 132 years. Today, at the ripe old age of 230, the mill's original sixteen-foot wooden overshot water wheel has long ago been replaced by electricity, recalling the Tin Pan Alley hit's second verse: "The old mill wheel is silent and has fallen down . . . ." However, the vital spirit of Tennessee's oldest business is still intact thanks to the mill's present owners, Elizabeth (St. John) and Ron Dawson. The couple bought the mill from Elizabeth's father, George St. John, in 1975.

These days, Ron Dawson manages most of the mill's daily business. "We're here to sell those authentic hard-to-find things places like Wal-Mart don't carry," he said, pointing out that there are five big box discounters within twenty miles of St. John Milling. "We've got hand-made quilts for forty dollars, delicious regional honey, and the best sweet and hot barbecue sauces from North Carolina and Tennessee."

In a voice that is an ebullient blend of pitchman, philosopher, and historian, Dawson continues to rattle off dozens of eclectic items from Western saddles to bags of wild birdseed—interspersed with segments of the mill's colorful history. After his thirty-six years at the mill, he clearly loves his job.

When customers stop by, purchases become almost an afterthought as Dawson discusses topics ranging from the economy to politics. When there's a lull in the conversation, his repertoire of sleight-of-hand magic is likely to become part of any transaction, large or small.

St. John Milling isn't like other businesses where profit is the only motive; it's a community institution that has continued a tradition of human fellowship for more than two centuries. Many of the mill's regular visitors are local folks like John Brown, a former employee who stops by frequently to loaf and help out where needed. And then there are loyal customers like Watauga resident René Shaw, who came for a bag of wild birdseed and stayed for a conversation about violence on television, which segued seamlessly into one about home-schooling, as the summer afternoon unfolded outside the cool sanctuary of the mill. To Dawson it was a day like every other at St. John, where honesty, friendship, and common sense, more than anything else the mill dispenses, have been its real stock in trade.

White's Mill

From St. John Milling, we head north for an hour or so to the crossroads at Rich Valley Road and White's Mill Road on the outskirts of Abingdon, Virginia, and take a tour of White's Mill. The 1790 gristmill is one of

St. John Milling Company, Watauga, Tennessee. Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

Virginia's official historic landmarks and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The mill used waterpower until 1989, when the wheel was retired and newer technology introduced. From ten o'clock in the morning until six in the evening, Wednesday to Sunday, except for January and February, visitors to the mill can see all of the old equipment as well as its newer upgrades.

Buckwheat, the mill's feline mascot, will greet you at the door while Matthew Downs will show you how the mill produces freshly ground cornmeal, buckwheat, wheat and rye flour, popcorn meal, and flax seed, bagged and ready to buy. "These days, we grind everything using a 1915 Williams mill," Downs said. "One of the mill's board members, Jenny Kling, does most of the grinding, since a miller must be over eighteen to run the equipment."

Throughout its history, the mill has only been out of service for ten years. In 2001, the property was purchased by the White's Mill Foundation, a group dedicated to renovating the mill through various fund-raising efforts including a Harvest Days celebration every October. Much of the foundation's financial support is generated by donations as well as proceeds from White's Mill Mercantile, across the road from the mill.

Elizabeth Scroggin is not only the store's part-time proprietor, she is also White's Mill's resident artist. When she's not waiting on customers, she's in her back-room studio painting. "It works out so well for me," she said. "I get to meet so many great people, plus I have time to paint."

The mercantile is a potpourri of Appalachian handicrafts and lore. "More than 140 local artisans are represented in the store," Scroggin said. "We've got handmade quilts, regional music, candles, books about Appalachia, and of course lots of artwork depicting White's Mill and the entire southern Appalachian region."

The Old French Mill

On French Mill Road, a few miles outside Dandridge, Tennessee, sits the Old French Mill. Likely built in 1796, the mill has had numerous owners. Until 1825, when it became a gristmill, it was known as the Perkins Iron Works. In 1920, the mill was purchased by the French family. By 1931, they had replaced the original wooden waterwheel with a metal overshot extent bucket wheel. Kenneth French continued running the mill until 1979 when

a flood washed away the supporting infrastructure, ruining the gearing. For the next decade, the mill sat idle until Freeman "Fritz" Lambright bought it and began restoring it in his spare time.

After he retired from Sears in 1999, Lambright was able to begin full-time work on the restoration. His own rustic cabin sits behind the mill along Dumpling Creek, which provides waterpower, so his commute is less than a minute. "So far, I've invested about ten thousand dollars in materials," Lambright said. "Fortunately, I have all the skills needed to do the work. Otherwise, I couldn't afford to restore it."

He is a member of the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills, a national organization whose members are mill owners or history buffs. They regularly share information or swap hard-to-find mill parts. The Old

Top left: The waterwheel at White's Mill sits idle these days, but the mill still grinds corn and wheat using newer technology.
Bottom right: The Old French Mill, Dandridge, Tennessee. Photos courtesy Stephen Newton.

French Mill is filled with giant gears, belts, and huge pulleys.

After twenty years of work, Lambright will soon sell his first bags of cornmeal, whole grain flour, and buckwheat, all ground by water power. "When folks stop by, I tell them I'm about eighty-five percent done," he said. "Gearing is the last thing on my list. Once that's done, I can start grinding corn the way they used to." ❖

REMEMBERING MR. GEORGE

Stephen Newton

When he died recently at the age of ninety-five, George St. John, known as Mr. George, represented the third generation of a milling tradition that began in 1866 when his grandfather, George Washington St. John, bought a mill from the family of Jeremiah Dungan. In 1904, Mr. George's father, James, inherited the mill. Mr. George started working there when he was five. "His dad would put him up on a stack of feedbags so he could get high enough to put the ears of corn through a two-hole motorized corn sheller," said his son-in-law, Ron Dawson.

Mr. George went on to study electrical engineering at the University of Tennessee. When he purchased the mill from his father in the 1930s, he converted it to electricity and introduced modern equipment. "In his time, Mr. George claimed he'd seen more changes than any other generation," Dawson said. "He used to say he'd seen things progress from a time when there were only horses and buggies on dirt roads that were nearly impassable all the way to us putting a man on the moon."

Although he sold the mill to his daughter and son-in-law in 1975, Mr. George played an active role there and would stop by on a regular basis. "One day, Mr. George was sitting here and a lady came in and asked him if it wasn't time he retired," Dawson said. "Well, I nipped that conversation in the bud right then. I said to her, 'Mr. George and I have already talked about that. When he turns 100, we're going to let him go to part-time.'" ❖

Stephen Newton is a communication professional with extensive experience in marketing, public relations, corporate communications, publishing, and project management.

George St. John. Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

BEANS GET AROUND

Bill Best

I was raised in Haywood County, North Carolina, in the Rogers Cove section of the Upper Crabtree Community. Our family practiced subsistence farming as did most of the other families in the community. We raised most of our food including all our vegetables, the hogs we depended on for meat, and the chickens that provided both meat and eggs. We also raised corn for grinding into cornmeal. The meal corn was white, and we raised yellow corn to feed animals.

At two and a half, I started working in the gardens, and by the following summer, I was helping my mother pick cornfield beans, which grew on corn stalks for support. Clinging to the stalks, I would pick the beans close to the ground while Mother would pick those higher up. Thus began my fascination with beans.

I was enthralled by the many colors of the beans, and I also enjoyed eating them. They were cooked with fatback in a large pot on our woodstove, and their flavor improved each day. They stayed warm at all times, needing only a stick or two of additional wood in the fire box to heat them up for each meal. Combined with fresh corn bread, fresh butter, and onions, they made a meal fit for a king. At age seventy-three, I still think so.

Mother's way of cooking beans was much like the way other women in the community cooked theirs. Some would use more meat and some would use less. Some would add potatoes and onions. I added fresh tomatoes, allowing their juice to leak into the mixture. It's still my favorite way of eating green beans.

Beans were woven into the fabric of everything we did as a family and community. Bean stringings were community rituals. When meals were served at family reunions, church dinners, dinners on the ground, or just family gatherings, beans played a dominant role. Beans that were dried into "leather britches," or, as they're called in some areas, shucky or shuck beans, were cooked at all times of the year. We also canned a lot of beans and pickled some.

When I started working for Berea College in 1962, my wife and I immediately purchased a farm and set out to establish our own gardening traditions. Blindly, I bought seeds out of seed catalogues, never suspecting the beans sent to me would be dramatically different from the ones I had grown up with. When I complained about the tough and tasteless beans, Mother sent me back to Kentucky with some of her varieties that had been in our family for generations.

Continuing a three-generation family tradition of selling fruits and vegetables to the public, I became a charter member of the Lexington, Kentucky, Farmers' Market in 1972 and founded the Berea market myself in 1973, recruiting several of my neighbors to sell their produce.

In Lexington, I soon realized most of my customers were from the hills of Eastern Kentucky or mountainous areas of other southern states. I was growing what had then become known as "heirloom" beans and tomatoes. Customers were buying my

Rose beans. Photo courtesy Earl Bowling.

beans to "flavor" the commercial types they had bought from other vendors. The commercial beans, such as Blue Lake, were harvested before the protein (seed) appeared so the hulls would not be tough. In reality, customers weren't buying my beans to flavor the others but to have some actual beans to go with their hulls.

Once the public found out about our bean-growing, we started receiving letters and phone calls from people in search of heirloom seeds. Over a six-month period, we received eighty-six letters from six states. Several people also brought beans to trade.

I realized then that Mother had been onto something, collecting and growing different varieties all those years. I further realized that heirloom beans and heirloom fruits and vegetables in general would probably be poised for a comeback because modern plant breeding was focusing on shipping and shelf life—meaning that quality and nutrition were taking seats in the back of the food bus.

At the Lexington Farmers' Market, people with Eastern Kentucky roots started bringing me beans from their home counties, while others who had migrated to Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan started sending me seeds in the mail. Some of the purest strains of Appalachian heirloom beans I possess came to me from those states.

About ten years ago, my son Michael and I, along with several friends and heirloom enthusiasts, founded a not-for-profit organization to help collect, promote, and share the seeds of Southern Appalachian heirloom fruits and vegetables. It's called the Sustainable Mountain Agriculture Center, and we also developed a Web site to announce to the world at large that old seeds are available.

We started getting e-mails and phone calls from throughout the country and Canada. During the first part of the twentieth century, many Appalachians ventured to Idaho, Oregon, and Washington to work in the timber industry, and they took their beans with them. In the state of Washington there is a "Tar Heel Bean" which was taken, it's thought, from Jackson County, North Carolina, around 1900.

I have also received beans carried to Washington from West Virginia, one by a retired forest ranger. Recently I received the Noble Bean that went to Oregon from West Virginia. In the summer of 2008, the great-granddaughter of the man who introduced the bean to the Pacific Northwest sent me some seeds which were not germinating. She had found them after about twenty years in a container where they had gotten damp and had briefly sprouted but also aborted the tiny plants in the process. I succeeded in getting six of a hundred to germinate but only one survived, and it was weak. Growing it in a greenhouse, I was able to get eleven seeds off the plant, four of which I sent back to her. If I'm lucky, I will have helped bring this bean back from extinction.

According to archeologists who have found carbonized evidence at two sites in Kentucky, beans have been grown in the Appalachians for at least 1,400 years. These were cut-short varieties, with beans so closely packed that they square off on the ends. Cut-shorts would have been highly valued by native peoples because of their high protein content. They're still highly valued today.

Through a tool of modern technology, the Internet, one of our oldest and most important foods is now getting around more than ever. My collection of Appalachian beans now exceeds 400 and grows almost weekly. I now have seeds from forty varieties for sale. Once people eat these old beans, the ones bred to be tough for mechanical harvest never quite satisfy. ❖

Bill Best is professor emeritus of physical education at Berea College in Kentucky and director of the Sustainable Mountain Agriculture Center.

Says Bill, "These are the most perfect cut-short beans that I have ever seen in that they are almost square."
Photo courtesy Bill Best.

BETWEEN THE ROWS WITH BOTH HANDS: BEAN-PICKING IN NORTHEAST TENNESSEE

Margaret Carr

"There's a art to it; you have to know how to do it." These are the words of Betsy Stout, who, as a teenager, worked in the bean fields in the Shady Valley and Stoney Creek communities in Northeast Tennessee. She, her mother, and her sister are members of a group of people known as "bean pickers." In the days before the large numbers of migrant workers we know today, local people took to the fields to harvest crops as seasonal workers. Most of them also harvested other crops—greens or tobacco—but they were primarily known as bean pickers.

Betsy began working with her friends picking beans as a teenager in the 1960s. "My friends wanted me to go. We made money to buy school clothes," she says. Her mother, Ruth Garland, used her earnings to supplement the household budget when she began picking several years later at the bidding of grower J.N. Taylor. Betsy's sister, Lisa Putman, eventually joined the pickers for many of the same reasons as her sister—to earn spending money. The Garlands, J.N., and Murray Taylor all lived in the Stoney Creek area of Carter County, but J.N. and Murray had large fields of green beans in Stoney Creek and in Shady Valley. These were commercial bean fields, and the harvest required large numbers of workers in order to get the crop gathered and ready for market.

The field owners would monitor the crop and schedule pickers when the beans were at their peak. The beans had to be clean and free from dirt, rocks, and other debris. If they had been picked following a rain, they were washed, although this was not usually among the pickers' responsibilities. Upwards of 150 workers might be in the fields at any one time—men, women, and children. Often entire families would work shoulder-to-shoulder. "Kids would help pick—three and four and on up," says Betsy. "It was for everybody."

Bean boys carried the filled baskets to a weigh station and deposited them into trucks for transport to market, and water girls walked the fields offering water to the pickers. "You'd holler when you were wanting the bean carrier, 'Bean carrier,'" remembers Betsy. "He'd come put them in the sack and seemed to me like we had a little old piece of paper with a number and he'd take them and go weigh them and pour them out and bring me my paper back and tell me how much my beans weighed. Then we had a girl

Betsy Garland in Carter County bean field in 1966. Photo courtesy Betsy Garland Stout.

that we'd holler at, 'Water,' that'd bring us a drink of water around. She carried the water with her."

The work was hot and back-breaking, the day began very early, and the workers picked for hours on end. The pay was calculated by the bushel, not by an hourly rate. Speed was the secret to making money. The pay was about fifty cents a bushel in the 1960s to two dollars and a half per bushel in the 1980s. A good day would be about fifteen bushels.

The art of picking beans, as Betsy calls it, was taught to the younger workers by the older and more experienced ones. She learned the art of "making money," picking beans quickly, from a woman who had been a bean picker for a number of years. "Oh, they was there from all ages. The woman I picked with, Viola, was about fifty-some years old, and I picked with her, but she taught me the trade and she learnt me everything that I knew how to pick."

It was easiest to go down between the rows picking with both hands. The workers generally picked through two rows at a time, setting the bushel baskets in front of them.

"Well, the way I do it, I put my basket up in front of me and I got two rows and then I'd pull the bean vines over on one side and take both hands and just pick them—just like milking a cow—just pick them if they're great big old beans," explains Betsy.

The crews picked half runners, shellies, and pole beans. Betsy, Lisa, and Ruth agreed that the pole beans were the easiest to pick. There was no bending over or kneeling involved in their harvest. According to Lisa, "Pole beans is the best beans to pick. It don't take long to fill a basket up with them. You could fly through there picking them."

The pickers enjoyed the camaraderie, but the work was tedious. They had to work through bad weather such as summer thunderstorms and be cautious about finding snakes and bees' nests in the fields. Bean fields were frequently surrounded by pasture land where cattle were kept, and workers had to beware of charging bulls. There were also few amenities. There was no outhouse, for instance, and restroom breaks had to be taken behind barns, trees, or whatever else might be available.

Generally, the day's picking began before dawn and ended prior to dusk. Workers' lunches often consisted of lunch-wagon style burgers and soft drinks. Betsy describes the day:

Well, I'd get up about five o'clock in the morning. They'd come pick me up about six, then we'd pick beans 'til about eleven or twelve. Then we had this man called Earl Lodter—used to have a restaurant up there at Stoney Creek. He had a little old truck that he'd bring our lunch to us. You'd get a hamburger, pop, and a fried pie for fifty cents. And then we'd eat and then we'd go back and we'd pick 'til four or five o'clock and come home.

While the Garlands' and the bean owners' relationship was that of employee and employer, they were also neighbors, and the Garlands and some of the other workers benefited from the generosity of their bosses. After the beans that were to be taken to market were harvested, workers were permitted to clear out any "leftovers" for their personal use and take them home for canning, drying, freezing, or pickling.

"Mama canned them, she dried them, she froze them," Betsy recalls. "We did everything in the name of God we could with them beans."

Ruth's work resulted in a bounty for the winter, but as Betsy put it, "I hated green beans for a long time."

Even though the work was difficult, the Garlands speak fondly of the experience and reminisce about the friends they made and the good times they had. Playful fights with the produce and flirting with the opposite sex provided diversion from the arduous work. There were also opportunities to socialize, make new friends, and become re-acquainted with old ones. "You made a lot of friends and people that you'd get used to," says Betsy. "From one year to the next, you know, you're ready to go back to see if your friends has come from different places that you don't get to see the whole year."

Ruth, who died in her late seventies a few months after my interview, said she always enjoyed picking beans. "Buddy I liked that work though. I wish I could do it now." ❖

Margaret Carr is a native of Carter County, Tennessee, and resides, with her daughter Lydia, in the Central Community. She is currently enrolled in the master of arts in liberal studies program at East Tennessee State University, where she has worked for over twenty-five years.

A PAEAN TO PORK

Elizabeth Sims

The next time you're in Manhattan and have made your usual reservation for dinner at David Chang's famed Momofuku, tell the server to send word back to the kitchen that you're friends with Allan Benton from Madisonville, Tennessee. The only thing that might impress him more is if you announced you were friends with David Chang himself.

Then order pork belly or Benton's prosciutto for your dining companion and watch the smile widen into a magical grin, the look of gratitude and wonder for such a sacrifice on behalf of dinner—the sweet surrender to the ultimate communion of human and pig.

The home of Benton's Smoky Mountains Hams is an humble cinder block building on Highway 411, just north of Madisonville, where Benton has been curing country hams since 1978. But like a modest yet finely built log cabin, the home of humility does not preclude greatness. Benton's hams are sought after by the best chefs in the country, as well as those of us who just know a perfect ham when we taste it.

Allan gives a lot of credit to his friend John Fleer, former executive chef at Blackberry Farm in Walland, Tennessee. "John called up here when he first started and asked if we could deliver daily to Blackberry," recalls Benton. "I told him it was a long way back into that holler and it would cost him an extra ten cents a pound. Now I know I could never repay John for spreading the word about my products."

Walking into Benton's—the combination smokehouse, curing facility, and store—you won't see a single white tablecloth. Instead, you will most likely be greeted by Allan himself—in part because that's just how you do things in East Tennessee but also because he generally puts in a seventy-hour work week. Step inside and then—not that you'll need prompting—breathe deeply. The richness of grain-fed pork, salted, brown-sugared, cured, aged, and smoked, with a hint of black and red pepper, mixes with the maple boards where the meat rests. Hams hang in stockings for at least nine months, scenting the air like a pork lover's idea of the perfect room freshener. It is the smell of quality and tradition, the smell of hard work and attention to detail.

I ordered bacon and ham for my siblings at Christmas, and the day I opened my mailbox and pulled the envelope with the receipt from Benton's out, the delicious, delectable waft of hand-crafted country hams came pouring out. I had to go inside

Allan Benton applies the cure. Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

and fix myself a fried egg and bacon sandwich.

Allan grew up in Scott County, Virginia, in the southwestern corner of the state, in an area known as England Valley. His grandparents on both sides of his family lived within a mile of one another, and every Thanksgiving, they would rise before dawn to begin the time-honored ritual of butchering hogs, performed with honest respect and thankfulness and with the promise to waste not, want not.

"We used every bit of the animal," said Benton, "and ate everything on that hog that could be consumed except the chitterlings."

Such commitment to efficiency and self-sufficiency was a way of life for Allan and his family. "My grandparents lived about as isolated and about as primitive a lifestyle as anybody could live in this country in the forties, fifties, and sixties," he said. His grandparents raised "everything they ate," including their vegetables, some chicken, and lots of pork. "The fatter they could get those hogs, the better because they didn't have Wesson oil in those days. They used the lard from those animals for seasoning and shortening."

These days, Benton's pork comes from the Midwest ("There's not a single packing house left in the state of Tennessee," he says), and while the pigs are grain-fed, predominantly organic, and all remarkable, they're slim compared to what he grew up slaughtering and eating as a boy. The typical hog on those Thanksgiving mornings in Scott County weighed 600 to 700 pounds and would feed both sides of the family for the year. Allan's grandfather would hook up a horse or mule to a sled to haul the animal to be dressed. A sled was necessary because the terrain would never allow for the well-being of wagons. The day was spent kilning the sausage, putting the hams and bacon in cure, and salting the meat.

"Until I was grown, I never ate a turkey in my life on Thanksgiving Day," mused Allan.

When it became too labor-intensive for his grandparents to carry on this annual rite, the Bentons began buying hams from Albert Hicks in Madisonville, Tennessee. He sold hams and bacon from a little smokehouse behind his home. In 1946, Hicks' business took an ominous turn when a New Yorker—a relative of Hicks' wife—inquired about the meat he was having every morning for breakfast. The New Yorker, excited by his discovery, wanted some.

"How many pounds do you think you want?" asked Hicks. To which the New Yorker replied, "Well, at least a hundred." "Oh Lord, I've never had that many hogs," Hicks told the man.

But he found the hogs he needed to fulfill the gentleman's request and then watched as his country ham endeavor took off, still in his backyard until 1973. After losing a considerable amount of money in hams gone bad, Hicks found, serendipitously, Allan Benton, a high school guidance counselor, on his doorstep, asking to lease the building and learn the craft. Benton learned the nuances of ham from Hicks, but he understood he needed more knowledge of food science. He ended up connecting with the University of Tennessee, where he listened and learned and took notes. Benton credits his successful business today in large part to his admission that he had lots to learn from the university's agriculture school.

Today, Benton is mentoring several young employees and hopes one of them will step up to continue the business after he hangs up his last ham. The process isn't difficult, according to Benton, but as a casual observer, I know it's an art, requiring a lot of elbow grease. Allan uses about eight pounds of cure—a salt and brown sugar mixture—per hundred pounds of hams, rubbing them with about two-thirds of the mixture and placing them in curing bins, wooden racks he and his father built from maple boards. They used maple because it is low in acid, hard, and durable.

A week later, the remaining cure gets rubbed on and the hams are kept at around thirty-eight degrees for a couple of months. At that point, they are covered with "stockingettes" and hung on wooden racks in a cooler, still around forty degrees.

"We're trying to emulate Mother Nature," explains Benton, as he replicates the springtime conditions in Appalachia that would follow the Thanksgiving butchering. After three or four months, the hams are moved out to finish the aging process. Benton's average aged ham is nine months in the

process; special hams are aged in the smokehouse much longer and cured with a special (and secret) family recipe.

"Those are the hams we make into what I call country prosciutto," says Benton. "I've never been to Europe, but I've read about Italian prosciutto and I've tasted it. They use sea salt and age the meat 300 days. I use my family's original recipe, and I cheat because I smoke mine. My prosciutto is aged fourteen to twenty months, not 300 days. I guess I'm trying to 'one up' my European cousins," he laughs.

Regardless of nomenclature, Benton's prosciutto, bacon, and country ham elevate pork to sublime levels, keeping a time-honored mountain art alive and well. Just take a slice of Allan's ham and prepare it his way, in a cast-iron skillet. Fry the ham in half a cup of coffee with a pinch of brown sugar, covering the pan to steam the meat and the liquid. Then brown the ham to finish. It's enough to make you want to get down on your knees and give thanks. ❖

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A PIG PICKIN'

The Good Ole Boys Pig Pickin' began nearly three decades ago in Lee County, Virginia. Two families, the Ingles and the Elys, opened the rolling Ingle pasturelands to friends and family around Jonesville, in celebration of friendship and fun. What once began as an annual boys' campout is now a small community custom savored by the young and old alike. Each year, as autumn creeps

Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

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Elizabeth Sims is a writer and consultant in Asheville, North Carolina, and is former president of the Southern Foodways Alliance.

A SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA PIG PICKIN'

Amanda Aubrey

The Good Ole Boys Pig Pickin' began nearly three decades ago in Lee County, Virginia. Two families, the Ingles and the Elys, opened the rolling Ingle pasturelands to friends and family around Jonesville, in celebration of friendship and fun. What once began as an annual boys' campout is now a small community custom savored by the young and old alike. Each year, as autumn creeps

Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

into the countryside, 200 Virginians remember their ties with each other and their land.

Jerry Ingle is the founding father of the Good Ole Boys Pig Pickin'. Thirty years ago he decided to combine two of his favorite pastimes, camping out with friends and roasting meat. Ingle attended Virginia Tech, where he studied meat inspection. The Hokie learned the art of roasting meat underground and now the practice is more than a form of cooking. It's a grassroots ritual and rite of passage.

The Friday of Labor Day weekend marks the kickoff for the Pig Pickin'. Jerry Ingle, his brother Jack, and various other family members prepare the roasting pit, located in the middle of the Ingle farm. The brothers use a backhoe to dig a deep hole for a wood fire. After the embers burn down, sand is added to the coals. Large cuts of meat are rubbed with spices and wrapped in foil before they are placed on the coals. A sheet of metal functions as a lid and covers the meat. Additional family members arrive to bury the meat, and a "stomping party" flattens out the dirt. After the pit is secured, the Ingles and Elys partake of their traditional kettle of Brunswick Stew, cooked over an open fire by the family matriarchs.

After supper, the women retire to the house while the men camp out. Traditional gender roles can be observed as the women rise early in the morning to cook breakfast from scratch while the men fish, play football, horseshoes, and Rook.

At five o'clock on Saturday evening, the official Pig Pickin' commences. Families are instructed to contribute a covered dish and a twelve-pack of non-alcoholic beverages. Strong, conservative Baptist values dominate the celebration. Before the prayer is said, participants watch as the family patriarchs ceremoniously shovel the meat out of the pit. Goat, pork, turkey, country ham, beef, and venison come out of the underground oven. Covered dishes overwhelm long rows of picnic tables.

One thing is certain: The dishes are not randomly chosen. Most of them are associated with a particular person and story: Coy's Sweet Potato Casserole, Gladys' Cowboy Beans, Daisy's Corn Bread, Nell's Fudge, Jean's Chili, Molly Huff's Caramel Pie. A family favorite always makes an appearance: Mamaw Dorcas' Slaw. Mamaw Dorcas, now deceased, owned and operated the Boone's Trail Drive-In, at the lower end of Lee County. The locals praised her slaw, homemade pies, and fried chicken. The slaw recipe does not contain a "secret ingredient," but it does call specifically for JFG Mayonnaise, the brand Mamaw Dorcas believed was best.

The Pig Pickin' winds down around midnight, but not before dancing and games. Some years back the event served as a barn-raising, and a large pavilion was built, complete with a concrete dance floor. Jack Ingle continues his tradition of calling the dances, from the Virginia Reel to the Electric Slide. Older dancers flat-foot, and young girls clog. The Pickin' has also doubled as a wedding reception.

Only the inner circle of family members spends the night on the Ingle farm, but Sunday morning is reserved for an enormous family breakfast and worship service.

The Good Ole Boys Pig Pickin' is more than a family reunion. It is a gathering of the larger church family and local community. The Pickin' preserves an identity and sense of pride for all who take part, connecting their future with their past.

RECIPE

Mamaw Dorcas' Slaw

1 head cabbage, shredded
½ cup sugar
Pinch salt
½ cup milk
1 cup JFG Mayonnaise
1 teaspoon vinegar
Black pepper to taste
5 small carrots, shredded

Mix all of the ingredients into the cabbage and refrigerate a few hours before serving. If the slaw is not moist enough, add more mayonnaise.

A native of Findlay, Ohio, Amanda Aubrey lives in Bluff City, Tennessee, where she teaches at Sullivan East High School. She received a bachelor of arts degree from Milligan College and is pursuing a master of arts in liberal studies at East Tennessee State University, concentrating on Appalachian studies. She thanks Ted and Kristen Booth, who invited her to the Pig Pickin'.

LESSONS FROM AN APPALACHIAN STOCKYARD: COAL SERVED AS DIETARY SUPPLEMENT FOR PIGS

David Ramey

Today, as you head down the four-lane John B. Dennis Bypass in Kingsport, Tennessee, from the Stone Drive intersection toward what locals call "Wadlow Gap," you pass Sullivan North High School, a Pal's fast-food restaurant, and a few small convenience stores. In the 1960s, when the road was two-lane, it was surrounded mainly by pasture. Near the intersection of John B. Dennis and Bloomingdale Road sat my family's farm.

The Ramey family practiced various farming techniques. Raising livestock to be processed for consumption and for the market today involves abiding by heaping piles of federal and state laws, measurements, and rules. During earlier times, Appalachian folks raised, slaughtered, and packaged livestock with little to no governmental interference.

Philip Ramey, my dad, was the youngest male in a family of seven. When he was barely eight, he began selling farm-raised chicken eggs to neighbors within walking distance of his homeplace, undercutting the local grocery and supply stores by a nickel. Once he had gathered a small following, he ordered laying pens out of the Sears-Roebuck catalogue to maximize egg production. Expanding his personal egg-selling business would be only a footstep on a path of Appalachian farm-raised profits. Beginning with raising hogs and selling fresh sausage, using those profits to corner a newly rising veal calf market, and finally making headway as a local beef supplier, my father has lived the life of business-savvy entrepreneur.

He began his day early, around six o'clock in the morning, by feeding the sows. He and his family kept ten or twelve of them on pasture. "We had a big sow ring [like you might see in the nose of a bull] in their nose where they couldn't root, and they would just pick grass like a cow so it didn't tear up the pasture," my father said.

He has always stressed the importance of making sure farm animals are receiving proper nutrition. When raising chickens, he would always have a secret recipe of soaked oats, corn, and other nutritious grains and supplements to help them grow strong and have healthy immune systems. "What I normally did," he said, "was give each sow about four or five pounds of grain mixture—seventy-five percent ground corn and twenty-five percent soybean meal—and that was mixed together and rationed."

After the sows were fed, it was time to feed the baby pigs. They were weaned from their mothers when the piglets weighed approximately forty pounds. My father would place them in a specially-built lot where a 300-pound feeder nourished about forty at a time, until they reached 200 pounds each. Along the way, he added black coal to the pigs' diet. "Hogs love regular black coal like people burn in the furnace—there is some type of mineral in it that they really crave," my father said. "So I made sure they had enough coal handy to take care of their mineral needs."

After the hogs reached about 200 pounds, my father would begin taking orders for whole-hog sausage. As a teenager, he took a job working in

Betty Jones stirs a cauldron of soup beans at Betty's Stockyard Cafe, Kingsport, Tennessee. Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

the pens at the Kingsport Livestock Auction. Here he found an outlet for easy, direct advertising. With the help of Hutcheson Brothers Packing Company, a slaughterhouse in Rye Cove, Virginia, he had the meat ground up into sausage. Back home, he would add sage, salt, and pepper and would sell up to 500 pounds of sausage a week, in five-pound packages. Whole-hog sausage, he said, "was made from a young hog—the hams, shoulders, and the middlings all included in the sausage—so that gave it a unique flavor, very much in demand."

His first customer was the restaurant at the Kingsport stockyards, "because I'd known those people when I was growing up." Now known as Betty's Stockyard Cafe (and formerly known as Dean's), the restaurant is directly across a bumpy gravel parking lot from the Kingsport Livestock Auction. Mrs. Dean and her husband, my father recalls, "were good cooks, and they had a big following. Brown beans and onions, corn bread, old timey cooking of the best proportion. She [Mrs. Dean] was a farm family cook, and she brought that same technique to the restaurant up there." The Livestock Auction and restaurant were less than a mile away from the farm where the hogs were raised, creating a close bond between producers and consumers.

My father estimates that only about forty percent of his sausage went to businesses to be cooked and resold. The other sixty percent was sold to families and individuals. Using the profits from his whole-hog sausage venture, he bought a small farm of his own.

While working at the auction, he caught word of the upcoming demand for veal calves. According to my father, during this time, milk-fed veal calves "made big money" and were "being shipped up east to Pennsylvania and New Jersey because there was a large Jewish population in that area and they loved veal. And of course the big restaurants up there loved to serve veal."

To begin his veal calf business, he first bought ten old milk cows to feed the veal calves. He then began to buy three-day-old calves from the Livestock Market once a week. "I would buy me a big bunch every week and bring them home and put them on the cows, and every week I'd haul some calves back to the stockyard [to be sold for veal]," he said. The profit margin for veal calves was large, and the effort required to raise and maintain them was relatively small.

"It was pretty much clear profit. You could take care of these cows while you were feeding the hogs."

Since there were many dairy farms around East Tennessee at the time, my father said a three-day-old Holstein calf could be acquired for thirty dollars. "I could sell six or eight calves every week, and I could hit the markets throughout the year. It was good money. Normally I could make fifty dollars a calf by raising it on the cow."

Once the veal calf market began to taper off, my father had a decent amount of money saved up from his job at the auction, from whole-hog sausage sales, and from his veal calves. Using that money, he started one of the last of his business ventures, the raising of steers for beef consumption. He purchased 300-to-400-pound steers when "the prices were right. Then I would bring them home, get them wormed out right good, put them on pasture, get them up to about 700 or 800 pounds."

Once they hit that mark, he began taking orders for beef the same way he had taken orders for whole-hog sausage, using the Livestock Auction as an advertising medium and undercutting large suppliers.

"People wanted a farm-fresh steer they could look at and say, 'That's the one I want,' and they could go to the slaughterhouse with it or just trust me to be the one to take it, because they knew that if they picked it out, that was the one they got."

My father contacted some of the individuals and restaurants he sold his sausage to and asked if they would be interested in any fresh ground beef, for decent prices.

"Sure enough, I started getting orders for hamburger—or good ground beef. It was a better grade than hamburger. It was eighty percent good lean meat."

The business continued to prosper until my father became purchasing manager at Mead Corporation in downtown Kingsport.

"When I got that job, it took a lot of my time away, but the lessons I learned from dealing with people and making sure your customers are taken care of—being honest with people and letting them know that your word's your bond and integrity is a key part of every day's business—once you have that trust developed, people will come back to you because they know they can depend on you."

That statement captures the general attitude of many Appalachian producers, honest and hard-working people who have prospered through rough times by selling a fresh product at a fair price. ❖

David Ramey interviewed his father for the "Foodways of Appalachia" class at East Tennessee State University.

A BREAKFAST PLATTER

Randy Sanders

His friend, Harry, had just gone through a gut-pounding divorce. He was also late, as usual. Harry could always make a morning appointment. He *loved* mornings. Anything later in the day, or heaven forbid, evening, became iffy at best. It wasn't selfishness; it was just that Harry was a busy man.

Tom turned a page. He was sitting in New York City's White Horse Tavern on Hudson Street—Harry's choice—a place famed for past patrons like Jack Kerouac, Bob Dylan, and Hunter S. Thompson. Always "on" in public, like any good stage actor, Harry loved to tick off the three reasons he loved the place by jabbing a finger, and then fingers, at your face.

"One, this is where Dylan Thomas drank. Two, this is where Dylan Thomas drank, and three"—dramatic pause, sonorous Thomas' voiceover cued, arms raised in triumph just before the three-finger attack—"this is where Dylan Thomas drank!"

Tom was reading *Barrayar* by his newly-discovered, favorite science fiction writer, Lois McMaster Bujold. He dog-eared a page with a line he found interesting—"My home is not a place, it is people." Tom wasn't sure he believed that. After all, could someone who grew up in Appalachia ever say that "place" was not a part of "home"? To him, those worn, defiant mountains would always be "home." It didn't matter if he lived in Manhattan for five years or fifty; those mountains were part of him. Still, he

Illustration by Samuel Crowe and Randy Sanders.

found Bujold's sentence intriguing enough to get Harry's take on it when, and if, he arrived.

Harry walked through the door with that certain actor's ease. He owned the world, even as his crumbled around him.

After three Scotches, talk of the day, the divorce, rehearsals, and an argument about whether science fiction writing was dribble, Harry worked up his courage to broach the reason he had called Tom for drinks.

"What are you doing for the holidays?"

"I'm going to Tennessee. Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'm not sure what I'll do."

"Why don't you go to Boston; visit your brothers and sisters? You know, reconnect with the Irish Catholic clan."

"Jesus, Tom, I haven't seen them in six years. I don't want to see them. I was wondering if I could come to Tennessee with you."

"Of course you can. My grandmother has plenty of room."

The plane was packed. Harry wanted the window seat because, as he put it, "This is my first visit to the land of mountain charm, and I don't want to miss a minute of it."

Tom could almost see the thought balloon seeping from the top of Harry's head—a balloon filled with the images of Tennessee mountain people: women in hoop skirts riding sidesaddle on coondogs—dogs that swirled around children straight out of the Little Rascals—all chased by either gaunt or fat men firing shotguns at squirrels, school buses, and captured Yankees. Harry thought he was headed to a foreign country even more exotic than his recent trip to Morocco.

Still, his enthusiasm for the trip was infectious. He was a kid at the circus, except for the hip flask.

"Tell me again about Grandma Lou," he said.

"What do you want to know?"

"Tell me about her cookin'."

Like anyone from outside the place, Harry's attempt at speaking "Southern" by dropping the "g" and hammering the "in" made Tom reach for the barf bag in mock distress. Harry caught the joke. Harry always caught the joke.

"Well, she's a good, traditional cook," Tom began. "Once, the *County News* published an article about her cooking that said she was known far-and-wide as the best cook in the county. When she read that, she said it meant she was so wide she could be seen from far away."

"And tell me again about the rules of engagement at her kitchen table."

"You eat *a lot*," Tom said. "She loves to see her family eat. And she'll always say something like, 'The mashed potatoes could have used a little more salt.' That's a cue to say, 'Oh no, the potatoes—or in your case, the mas'-taters—are wonderful just as they are.'"

Harry smiled at the taters reference before adding, "Grandma Lou, I don't know nothin' bout birthin' no babies." You had to love the guy.

It was a little over an hour's drive from the airport to Grandma Lou's house—if they had gone straight there. Instead, they had detoured to Johnson City to pick up Christmas presents. Harry insisted on buying presents for Tom's relatives. Fortunately and conveniently in Harry's mind, any present could be purchased at a well-stocked liquor store. He was especially proud of what he picked out for Grandma Lou.

"Do you think she'll like it?"

"Harry, she doesn't drink Scotch."

"It's Glenfiddich, for Christ's sake."

"Well, she will occasionally drink a glass of wine, but she doesn't drink Scotch."

"Then let's get her a bottle of wine and a bottle of Scotch."

They spent almost an hour in the store. It took Tom a full ten minutes to talk Harry out of buying bottles of DeKuyper's Grape Pucker schnapps for the family's teenage nephews and nieces. After two trips to the rental car and with the final load in hand, Harry turned to the store's patrons and employees alike to say, "Y'all have a real good Merry Christmas." Sometimes the guy wore on you.

It was almost midnight before they arrived at Grandma Lou's. A note in the kitchen was placed

beside a plate of Christmas cookies. Tom read the note to Harry.

Dear Boys,
Glad you're here! Tom, put Harry in the back bedroom. You take the blue room. Milk in the fridge. See you in the morning.

Love,
Gran

Tom put a log on the fire, and they opened one of Harry's Christmas presents to himself—a bottle of Glenfiddich.

"I can't believe your grandmother has a microwave! It seems unnatural, somehow."

"You mean it doesn't jive with your image of a Tennessee grandmother."

"Maybe."

"No maybe about it."

"Well, how can the best cook in the county get there by using a microwave?"

"She doesn't *cook* using a microwave. She warms stuff up in it. And you've got to remember that Grandma Lou and Granddaddy set up housekeeping during the Depression. To her, modern appliances are miracles. I doubt she misses getting up at four-thirty in the morning to build a fire in the cookstove."

With that bit of family history delivered, Tom turned in.

In the morning, Harry followed the smell of coffee and bacon to the kitchen. There she stood, Tom's grandmother. She was bigger than he expected—not so much fat as big.

"Well, hello there. You must be Harry."

"Well, hello yourself. You must be Grandma Lou."

They knew they were going to get along famously. They were both genuine hams—Harry on Broadway; Louise in the kitchen.

"That smells really good," Harry said. "And this coffee is excellent."

"Well, thanks, or rather, thanks to Tom's mother. She brought it to me from New Orleans. How do you like your bacon, Harry?"

"What does the chef recommend?"

"Now Harry, I've been forewarned that you're a gold-plated charmer. You needn't work this room."

"I always work the room, Grandma Lou. It's what I do."

She grinned.

"I understand. So anyway, this bacon is sliced thin. I'd recommend very crispy."

She planned meals like they were Army maneuvers. This morning's was a simple exercise—a platter of eggs and bacon, and toast. Canned jams in small bowls were on the table, alongside butter, salt, pepper, and orange juice.

She would place the platter on the table, wheel to retrieve the toast, and, finally, gather the plates from the plate warmer. A plate warmer was a bit too much fuss for her taste, but it had been a gift from the Florida "summer neighbors" up the road, and she thought Harry might expect such niceties.

"Do you think we should wake Tom?" she asked.

"Nah, he's not much of a morning person. Besides, he seemed pretty wiped out last night."

"Well then, we'll let him sleep. It will give us a chance to get better acquainted."

With that, she placed the platter on the table and turned to pull the toast from the oven.

"This looks delicious, Grandma Lou."

Although Harry could not see it, she smiled. She quickly pulled the bubbly, buttery toast from the oven and sliced each piece, diagonally. She turned to see Harry eating eggs with the serving fork. He had mistaken the platter for his plate!

"Here's some toast, Harry."

Hours later Tom walked into the kitchen. He hugged his grandmother.

"Well, you look mighty fit," she said. "Want some breakfast?"

"Sure. I'll go get Harry up."

"Don't bother him," she began. "He went back to bed. That boy can eat more than any three men you've ever seen. Nine eggs, half a pound of bacon, and six pieces of toast. He said to tell you 'you owed him,' whatever that means." ❖

Randy Sanders is managing editor of *Now & Then*.

TROUT FARMING ON HUMP MOUNTAIN: THE LIVELIHOOD OF MIKE CABLE

PATRICK LOVEN

High on top of Hump Mountain in Elk Park, North Carolina, while most people are still asleep, Mike Cable can be found loading his Ford truck with live rainbow trout. Hump Mountain Trout Farm is located just below "the Hump," a bald area over 4,000 feet up. On the Hump, Mike's father, William Cable, grazes a herd of African Watusi cattle whose horns can reach a spread of six feet.

William and two of his sons, including Mike, and his only daughter live within walking distance of each other, though nobody wants to make that walk often, since the terrain is so rugged. The four homes, a trout farm, a tumbling pigeon coop, the grazing Watusis, and the remnants of several other profitable enterprises can all be found on land William purchased years ago.

The idea for a trout farm was hatched over forty years ago, when William built a swimming pool for his young children. As Mike recounts, "The water was so cold, hell, in July you'd turn blue in just a few minutes." Faced with a swimming pool no one could swim in, William decided to put some fish in it. They fared well, so ten years later, William built ponds. It took an additional eight years to finish all the concrete.

Hump Mountain Trout Farm is a series of eight spring- and creek-fed ponds in a stair-step pattern, each a yard lower than the previous one. Water falls to each of the ponds and is oxygenated. Two indoor ponds serve as the hatchery. When I was there, only one of the indoor ponds contained fish, 100,000 rainbow trout, each no more than two inches long. Five or six of the outdoor ponds had fish in them. The upper pond held about 100,000 fish measuring approximately three to five inches; the others held full-sized, market-ready fish.

The original clients for Hump Mountain Trout Farm were restaurants. "Daddy built the market one restaurant at a time," Mike recalls. "He started at one and went to 250."

William is over seventy years old now, so Mike runs the operation. He has almost completely pulled out of the restaurant business.

The federal government requires the farmer who sells to restaurants to fill out a lot of paperwork, something Mike is not keen on, especially after he has driven truckloads of fish for eight hours. "For me it's easier to raise the fish and sell them to the processor and let him deal with all the cleaning and all that mess," he said. Restaurants buy the fish cleaned and ready to cook. He now only sells to about ten restaurants, all local.

The majority of his business is with processors and with individuals or groups who buy the fish to stock their own ponds. Some of Mike's fish end up as far away as Ohio, where they go to big catch-out

Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

ponds. These are ponds usually so full of fish that you don't even need bait on your hook, and you pay by the pound for what you catch. Some fish also go as far north as Pennsylvania, where they end up in large dressing houses. By selling to these types of clients, Mike is able to avoid dealing with government agencies, for which he has little respect. He has good reasons for this contempt.

Mike told me the story of a government employee who came to the farm her first day on the job. "She's been to school for four years, but she's never been on a trout farm," he said. After taking measurements and doing some calculations, she concluded that all Mike's fish must have been dead. When she told Mike her findings, he said, "I understand. They're swimming dead all down through there."

Mike was quick to point out that regulations imposed upon a trout farmer do not reflect real-life trout farming. For example, the government allows six hours out of the water before fish have to be cleaned. "Hell, in six hours in the sun they're damn near rotten to start with, so the guidelines don't even get close to real life," Mike exclaimed.

His fish are never frozen because they are sold to a local market within a half day's drive from the farm. From March until the beginning of November, Mike often works twelve or more hours a day, seven days a week. A lot of his time is spent in his truck delivering fish—as he remarked, "It ain't laying on the couch watching TV." He usually starts work around three-thirty in the morning. He notes that by the time he has loaded, delivered, cleaned, and fed his fish, his workday is nearly twice as long as that of a government worker who is guaranteed a paycheck every month.

Fish have to be fed several times a day and monitored almost constantly to make sure oxygen levels are adequate and that predators don't find a feast.

During the winter, Mike takes a break from working, except for feeding and caring for his fish. He also uses this time to hatch eggs so he will have fish for the next season. For a month or two he just hides out and recuperates.

There are other reasons for his winter hiatus. The trout farm is at an altitude where, when winter hits, it stays. It is impossible to move a truckload of fish in two feet of snow. The market also declines in the wintertime. Many people leave the area when winter sets in, and those who remain have few options other than staying put when the snow piles up.

Trial and error has been the Cables' method of learning how to run a trout farm. "If I lose fish, and I have lost them before, I freeze them, and I've got a contract with Grandfather Mountain," Mike said. The park pays him for his dead fish, which are then used to feed bears, mountain lions, and eagles. This backup plan allows him to salvage about half the amount of money he could have gotten for live fish.

"If you're going to stay in the business, you got to keep your product coming," Mike said. "I'll sell fish to anybody, one fish or a hundred thousand." ❖

Patrick Loven graduated from East Tennessee State University in 2007 with a bachelor of arts degree in sociology. He is now teaching English in Changhua, Taiwan.

NOURISHING MINERS AND DODGING THE USDA: WEST VIRGINIA'S PEPPERONI ROLL LINKS ITALY AND APPALACHIA

Fred Sauceman

On the outside, they look like a plain hunk of bread. Or maybe a small, uncut hoagie bun. Or an elongated dinner roll. The exterior provides no clue, no tipoff, that meat awaits inside. Cut or bite into a West Virginia pepperoni roll, though, and the smell and flavor of an Italian kitchen come forth. Broken bread reveals sausage.

It's that mystery of unseen meat baked inside bread that got the attention of the United States Department of Agriculture in the 1980s and almost killed the pepperoni roll. But more on that story later.

The pepperoni roll has never migrated far beyond its place of creation, the northern part of West Virginia. Differing health department regulations in other states may account for the insularity of the product. Convenience stores around Buckhannon, Morgantown, Bridgeport, Clarksburg, and Fairmont stock them. Marty's Italian Bakery in Clarksburg delivers regularly to Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stores as far away as Youngstown, Ohio, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Jennifer Yurko is a server at Minard's, a spaghetti house in Clarksburg that has operated since 1937 out of a family home, first feeding lasagna and meatballs to glass workers and railroad men. "When my mom would pack me lunches, she'd always put pepperoni rolls in there. Now, when I'm away at the University of Cincinnati, I'll either bake them or have my mom send me packages of them every month. She bakes them with mozzarella cheese, and we have them warm out of the oven all greasy and good. Whenever we're coming home on breaks from college, my friends and I, once we hit the West Virginia border, we'll buy lottery tickets and pepperoni rolls and eat them in the car on the way back home."

People in these parts of the Mountain State are indeed pepperoni roll passionate. "When the University of West Virginia Mountaineers play the Pitt Panthers, there's a lot of buns going out of here," says John Menas, owner of Colasessano's in Fairmont. "On Tuesday morning prior to the Saturday game, we start getting calls with pepperoni roll orders, to be ready for pickup at eight o'clock in the morning on game day. Football fans don't want to be late for a ballgame. They reheat the pepperoni rolls in their travel homes. We've sold upwards of a thousand on game days, reloaded, baked, and gotten more out the door."

Most of the Italian bakeries that took up the art of the pepperoni roll some eighty years ago call them just that, rolls. At Colasessano's, bun's the word. A

Pepperoni roll cross-section. Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

typical pepperoni roll, except for a little drip or two of sausage grease, is a clean eat. But Colasessano's dresses buns to a messy glory.

"The Colasessano family started slicing them open and adding things," says John Menas. "They put their pizza cheese in there. They made a hot dog sauce and put it in there. The peppers they canned for pizzas went in. Now you can get hot peppers, sweet peppers, even mixed."

John embodies two of the phenomena that came together to create the pepperoni roll: immigration and coal-mining. His family is Croatian, not Italian, but they came to this part of West Virginia for the same reason most Italians did—to make a living mining coal. Today, the Italian population of Clarksburg is around forty percent.

John hauled coal out of mines for thirty years. In October of 2007 he switched off the light on his helmet for the last time and donned a baker's apron, as the new proprietor of Colasessano's.

"Coal mining breaks you down a little at a time, then you're zapped," he says. "Not too many guys who come out of the mines, who were good workers, have too much left in them for their retirement days. It's already started on me. I can feel my joints aching."

John traveled fifteen miles underground every day to reach the spot where he dumped coal onto a belt mine. It took that coal two hours and twenty-five minutes to reach the light of day. Tired as he was, John has found new energy in an old product, West Virginia pepperoni rolls. And he's opened a slick new version of Colasessano's in Bridgeport's Meadowbrook Mall. Often it's near midnight before his work day ends.

"When that alarm goes off at five o'clock, I jump up ready to go. Pepperoni buns aren't a job. They're a passion. All the coal miners going to work will stop to get their gas, their drinks, and their pepperoni rolls. Even now I'll take some buns up to those boys at Humphrey number seven in Morgantown. Humphrey was a beautiful mine."

Some have laid claim to the title of creator of the pepperoni roll, but most of the bakers I talked to think that's an impossible fact to pin down.

"There's no real proof as to who was the originator," says John Brunett, fourth generation co-owner of Tomaro's Bakery in Clarksburg. "My grandmother, who died in the summer of 2007 at age ninety-two, couldn't remember, but she knew they were there at the beginning."

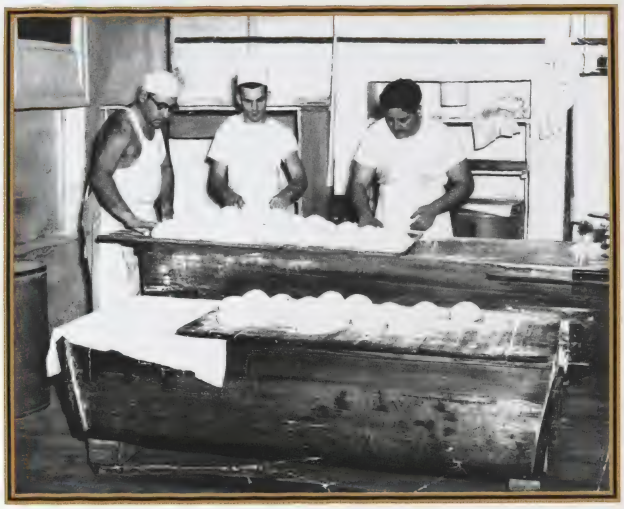
Tomaro's opened its doors in 1914 in the Glen Elk section of Clarksburg and has never moved. (Fairmont's Country Club Bakery claims that Giuseppe "Joseph" Argiro created the pepperoni roll in 1927, but the current owner declined to be interviewed for this article.)

Although pinpointing the exact person who thought of encasing pepperoni in bread may well be impossible, Italian bakers agree that the pepperoni roll was conceived as lunch for coal miners. They needed a type of meat that would not spoil. They needed a food that was portable, that could be eaten with one hand and didn't require a plate or a fork. And they needed something that was filling.

Tomaro's hasn't changed its pepperoni roll method since John Brunett's great-grandfather's time. Bread dough is stuffed with freshly sliced sticks of pepperoni. Colasessano's holds with sticks as well, always six and a half inches long, always a quarter inch wide, and always counted out, six in each bun. John Menas calls it portion control. That kind of exactitude eliminated customers accusing one another of having more meat in their buns.

At Marty's, pizza-style rounds of pepperoni are preferred. They aren't counted out, but pepperoni roll maker Steve Hickman says all the employees around the table have made so many pepperoni rolls—over a thousand dozen in a typical twelve-hour shift—that

Anthony "Tony" Tomaro, patriarch of the pepperoni roll. Photo courtesy John Brunett.



the amount of sausage in the bread is pretty constant from one roll to the other, despite the lack of any strict accounting.

Some bakeries, like D'Annunzio's Italian Bread in Clarksburg, which has been in business since 1926, add no cheese to their pepperoni rolls. At Marty's, though, there are three different cheesy styles: mozzarella, hot pepper cheese, and American. Marty's makes a two-layer foldover, too, with around twenty-four discs of pepperoni. The company's pepperoni rolls that are sold in convenience stores under the Rogers' and Mazza's label feature a sweet dough.

The red, green, and white colors of the Italian flag are prominent on the sign outside Marty's in the East View neighborhood of Clarksburg. Downtown, over a bowl of spaghetti and Italian sausage with peppers, Mike Minard tells me there was a time when people in the area hid their Italian heritage for fear of discrimination. It's the reason his southern Italian name does not end in "i" today.

John Brunett tells me the "i" was dropped off his family name for business reasons. "My grandfather, John Brunett, had another relative with the same name who wasn't as prompt in paying his bills. My grandfather said he changed the name up a bit so everyone would know which bills were his. As an established businessman, he wanted to always have his bills paid. And that's why we're still in business today."

The biggest threat to Tomaro's and the other Italian bakeries in northern West Virginia, it turns out, wasn't the Great Depression or the rising price of flour. It was the USDA. Even though the pepperoni that is used in rolls is already federally inspected, in the 1980s the USDA got nervous. It attempted to reclassify the bakeries as meat packers. Had that come to pass, the bakeries would have been required to install expensive concrete floors and draining systems, "potentially delivering a devastating blow not only to the future existence of the West Virginia pepperoni roll, but more importantly, to the family-owned businesses that produce them," wrote West Virginia Senator Jay Rockefeller, in a September 12, 2002, letter to Bob Heffner, who maintains a Web site that celebrates the pepperoni roll. "Because of the proposed classification, the pepperoni roll may have ceased to exist," Rockefeller continued.

"We just took up the cause and then beat up a little bit on the Department of Agriculture, which is always fun to do," Rockefeller recalled some twenty-one years later. "You take on a little war. He [the pepperoni roll maker] was being squashed by something called the federal government, which I'm a part of, and that's not fair."

Competitors in the pepperoni roll business cast one-upmanship aside and joined forces to protect their products from governmental meddling.

"Congressman Alan Mollohan (from West Virginia's First District) wanted all the bakeries to provide him with information and proof that the pepperoni roll was safe," says John Brunett of Tomaro's. "And he came to our defense so they could continue to be made to this day."

Adds Rick D'Annunzio, "It all started with Congressman Mollohan's office. Since pepperoni's a cured thing and we bake it and immediately package it, it's not an item that spoils readily without being in refrigeration." It was a precept those early-twentieth-century coal miners knew well.

John believes the government got into the issue without full understanding. He says eating pepperoni rolls is "as safe if not safer than going to a fast-food restaurant and getting something out of the drive-through window. When the USDA didn't see preservatives and additives, they felt the pepperoni roll wasn't safe. And in my opinion, all these preservatives and additives are probably doing more damage and harm to us than the more natural foods."

The shelf life of a pepperoni roll is about a week to a week and a half. Those that are delivered to convenience stores by companies like Abruzzino's in

Left to right John Brunetti, Tom Ketron, and John Tiano roll bread at Tomaro's Bakery in Clarksburg, West Virginia. Photo courtesy John Brunett.

Gypsy, West Virginia, are removed from the shelves if unsold after a week.

Amid the controversy, Joe Colasessano, then the third generation of his family to work in the Fairmont bakery that still carries his family name, said, "I don't understand how they can ban pepperoni rolls when a pizza pocket is OK."

In 1987, Rockefeller contacted then Secretary of Agriculture Richard Lyng, who, according to the senator's 2002 letter, decided the USDA "would hold bakeries that produce pepperoni rolls accountable only to existing inspection standards."

The pepperoni roll panic passed, and the old Appalachian theme was reinforced again: the mountaineer's distaste for governmental interference.

Pepperoni roll baking brings out other cultural traits common to Italy and Appalachia: loyalty to family and the veneration of labor.

John Brunett's grandmother, Anna Tomaro Brunett, could still speak Italian until the day she died. John gave up trying to learn the language because his aunts would teach him one dialect and his grandmother another. The Italian-American Brunetts keep contact with the Brunettis in the Abruzzo region of Italy, where the family runs a jewelry store. Their mutual interests aren't rings and necklaces, though. What keeps them together is anise seed.

"All of our anise seed, which we use to make Easter bread, still comes from Italy, and our relatives pick it and vacuum pack it," John says. "It goes through Customs, and my mom purchases it from the family. All our Easter bread that's made one time a year for four weeks is one hundred percent still made with Italian anise."

There's no better way to understand the Italian-American traditions observed in this part of Appalachia than to visit Tomaro's Bakery shortly after noon on a Sunday, when Mass has just ended at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Clarksburg.

Sunday-morning quiet an hour earlier, Fourth Street suddenly comes alive when church lets out. The parking lot at Tomaro's is full. On-street parking is non-existent. People are lined up for sixty feet down the sidewalk, awaiting pepperoni rolls.

"Out-of-town people visiting relatives here on Sundays come in and they don't just buy one, they buy dozens," says John's mother Janice, president of the company.

"Being a strong Catholic- and Italian-oriented area, you still have your family meals on Sunday," adds John. "My wife and her mother and sister all take turns rotating who has the Sunday pasta. People come and get their hot bread, their pepperoni rolls to snack on while they're waiting on their spaghetti and meatballs to be ready."

There may be disagreement over who made the first pepperoni roll in West Virginia, but the Brunetts are sure about who formed the first mini pepperoni roll: Janice Brunett. She'd noticed a two-year-old nephew having trouble holding a normal-sized roll.

"It was always funny to watch this little boy trying to hold a pepperoni roll," John remembers. "Mother started making the smaller ones for him when she had leftover dough. When people saw them, they asked us to start selling them in the bakery, and now we do, by the dozen."

Customers say the meat-to-bread ratio is higher in the mini rolls, and they're often served at wedding receptions around Clarksburg.

Just as John Menas uses the same pizza dough recipe brought over from Italy by the Colasessano family, the Brunetts at Tomaro's have stayed true to the weights and measures of 1914. Every product that was made by Tomaro's on the eve of World War I is still made today, with a few additions like the minis.

"We make a Texas toast-style pan loaf that's used for the Giovanni," says John.

The Giovanni is a meat patty dressed with roasted peppers and cheese and served between slices of buttery, garlicky, grilled bread at places like the Ritzy Lunch in Clarksburg. Yes, the meat is readily visible. And yes, the Giovanni was created around Clarksburg. But that's yet another story. ❖

Fred Sauceman is the author of the three-volume book series *The Place Setting: Timeless Tastes of the Mountain South—From Bright Hope to Frog Level*, published by Mercer University Press in Macon, Georgia.

THE CABBAGE ROLL QUEEN OF SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Miriam Rubin

Josephine Gresko awoke early and had prepared 150 cabbage rolls before I arrived at her house around noon. She lives behind the beauty salon she's operated for many years. As I was welcomed we peeked under the lids of two large electric roasters. Holding roll after roll of stuffed cabbage, the roasters were nestled on the floor between the styling chairs. The rolls were to be served at a church supper that evening for her friend's funeral. I was there to get the recipe.

Mrs. Gresko lives in the little town of Carmichaels, in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania. It's the town where my husband was raised and where my brother-in-law still operates the family funeral home. The 2000 census lists the population at 525.

Carmichaels gained folk status in 2005 when actress Patricia Heaton and her husband produced a movie, *The Bituminous Coal Queens of Southwestern Pennsylvania*, documenting the fiftieth anniversary of the Coal Queen pageant. Marching bands, floats, parades, and a beauty-and-talent contest salute the area's major industry, coal mining.

Later in the year, Carmichaels hosts a smaller event, the Pigs in a Blanket Festival. This time the celebration is all about stuffed cabbage rolls. Around the town square, on an unfailingly sweltering day, you'll see women, mainly elderly, selling steaming hot homemade pierogies and stuffed cabbage. If this festival chose a queen, the title would go to Josephine Gresko. According to local lore and my in-laws, her cabbage rolls are the best.

Yes, this is Appalachia; this is "King Coal" country. Yet here, instead of corn bread and beans, the favored "soul food" is Eastern European ethnic. It might be Slovakian, Serbian, Ukrainian, Polish, or Hungarian. The cabbage rolls might be called Halupki, Galumpkis, Golabki, or Sarme.

Food traditions also include pierogies, kielbasa, Haluski (shredded cabbage and noodles), and nut rolls (also made with apricot or poppy seed fillings). These foods were brought over by the families of men who left or were recruited from Eastern Europe in the early 1900s to work the mines of southwestern Pennsylvania.

Josephine Gresko. Photo courtesy David Lesako.

Cabbage rolls and pierogies are served at holiday feasts, celebrations, and funerals. Preparation is time-consuming and laborious, and these dishes are not often made by the younger generation.

Mrs. Gresko's kitchen is large and tidy, with counters packed full. Central to the room is the oval kitchen table, where the prep work happens. She doesn't use cutting boards, preferring to cut up the celery and onions in her hand with a favorite paring knife.

Her daughter Diane McCombs and granddaughter Leslie were already in the kitchen when I arrived. Neither of them make stuffed cabbage. Relatives George (Uncle Ducky) and Nancy McCombs arrived just after I did and sat across the table, watching and chatting as we made cabbage rolls.

Josephine Gresko is a widow in her late seventies. Born in Carmichaels to Italian parents, she married a Hungarian man whose parents came over from Budapest.

At sixteen, Mrs. Gresko wanted to be a hairdresser. Since she was under age, her father slipped some money to the owner of a local beauty school, and she was in business at eighteen. By then she was married, had one child, and was living with her in-laws.

Her mother-in-law, Bertha Gresko, was the cook for a Jewish family in Brownsville, a town along the Monongahela River and a major artery for coal transport. Bertha taught Josephine to prepare Hungarian specialties, including stuffed cabbage rolls.

"I've been making them since I was sixteen," she said. "Every Sunday, we'd have cabbage rolls, chicken soup, and my mother-in-law's breaded chicken. If I didn't have to go to the dentist today, I would have made the soup."

Mrs. Gresko has been a beautician since 1947. Her shop is full of photos and objects: family, religious, and Elvis-oriented. She has seen the Pope and met Miss America and has pictures to prove it. Along with Diane, there are three sons, thirteen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. With nails painted a deep maroon and decorated with swirls of silver, her hands never stop moving, cleaning, chopping, gesturing.

"I don't measure," she tells me.

A small woman, at four feet, eleven inches, she moves faster and more often than anyone else in the room, telling me recipes, answering an ever-ringing phone, greeting visitors, and introducing a son, Joey, who has stopped by.

They say she feeds the entire town.

Mrs. Gresko watches as I mix ground beef in a large tub with rice, onion, celery, eggs, and seasonings. I mix it with my hands, and she approves. After I'm done, she neatens it up, shaping the meat into a square loaf, incorporating the straying bits of vegetables and egg.

We start to roll the cabbage, paring the thick parts from the leaves.

"Trim that cabbage and put the meat in it like a pocket," she instructs, shaping and squeezing the rolls in strong hands and lining them neatly in the pan. We sprinkle on sauerkraut, add the bits of cabbage, crushed tomatoes, tomato juice, salt, and pepper. Each layer is seasoned. The tomato can is rinsed out and the liquid poured over the cabbage rolls. "I don't waste nothing."

That day, history was imparted in recipes. Josephine Gresko told me few personal facts and stories, yet I understood that she never stops working and that she supports a network of family and friends with food and love. Everyone is welcome at her kitchen table.

When the customers whose hair she has done for years die, she goes to my brother-in-law's funeral home and styles their hair one last time. And she makes cabbage rolls for the meal following their funerals.

She covers the pan of cabbage rolls with a big piece of aluminum foil, getting them ready for the oven.

"I put them to bed," she says, making the sign of the cross over the pan. "I bless them. They're made with love."

RECIPE

Josephine Gresko's Stuffed Cabbage Rolls

Mrs. Gresko chooses lighter "female" cabbages instead of the heavier "male" ones. The leaves come off more easily.

2 medium-size cabbages, cores cut out
2 pounds ground round or chuck
1 large onion, coarsely chopped
2 stalks celery, coarsely chopped (half-inch pieces), about 1 cup
1 cup raw long-grain white rice (not converted rice)
2 large eggs
2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes
½ teaspoon garlic salt
Salt and ground black pepper
1 pound sauerkraut, from a bag, drained and rinsed
1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
2 cups tomato juice

Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat and add one of the cabbages. Reduce heat slightly and blanch the cabbage, turning it a few times, about 5 minutes, until leaves begin to loosen and look translucent.

With cabbage still in the water, using a long-handled fork or tongs, pull off leaves as they loosen and place in a roasting pan or tray. Repeat with remaining cabbage. Don't discard the inner leaves or any broken leaves. Reserve the water. Let cabbage cool.

In a large bowl or tub, put ground beef, onion, celery, rice, eggs, parsley flakes, garlic salt, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper. Mix well with your hands, adding ¼ cup water if the mixture feels "tight."

With a paring knife, trim tough, thick cores from the outer sides of cabbage leaves. Coarsely chop the smaller leaves and cabbage bits and strew about half over the bottom of an 18-x-10-x-3-inch heavy-duty foil roasting pan.

Pour reserved cabbage water over the sauerkraut in a colander to rinse it more, if you like. Drain well. Strew half the kraut over the cabbage in the pan and cover with half the crushed tomatoes and 1 cup tomato juice. Season with salt and pepper and mix well.

To make the rolls, Mrs. Gresko shapes about ¼ cup of the meat mixture into a sausage (not too tight) for a large cabbage leaf, less if the leaf is smaller.

She uses her hand as a cup to shape the rolls. The curved side of the cabbage leaf faces her palm; the core end is toward her wrist. She puts the filling on the bottom of the leaf and folds the bottom over the filling, pressing in. Then she folds in the sides, pressing and rolling, but not too tightly, and not worrying if a leaf breaks. The filled leaves are placed seam-side down in the pan, in even rows, 5 or 6 across, for a total of around 25 to 28 rolls.

Cover the rolls with the remaining chopped cabbage (chop any unused leaves) and the sauerkraut. Top with remaining crushed tomatoes and tomato juice. Salt and pepper generously. Rinse out the crushed tomato can with about ½ can water. Pour the water over the top; don't worry about mixing it in.

Cover pan tightly with foil. Place in a preheated 325-degree oven and bake 1 hour. Check after 30 minutes to be sure it's bubbling. If not, turn the oven to 350.

After 1 hour, reduce temperature to 250. Bake 1 to 1 ½ hours longer, until rolls are tender and the meat and rice are fully cooked. (Cut open a roll to check.)

Serves 8 to 10

A 1976 graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Miriam Rubin was the first female cook at the Four Seasons Restaurant in New York City. She contributes food features to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and writes for the Pittsburgh-based lifestyle magazine *Table*.

HISTORY IN A BUN

Amy Evans

Birmingham, Alabama, lore says George Cassimus was the first Greek immigrant to settle in the Magic City. He arrived in the late nineteenth century and soon established himself in the restaurant business. Cassimus's Fish Lunch House may or may not be the first Greek-owned restaurant in Birmingham, but it certainly paved the way for others. Indeed, many Greek immigrants made their way to Birmingham in search of opportunity, and they found it working in the kitchens and dining rooms of restaurants owned by family and fellow countrymen. But some struck out on their own. With little investment, Greek immigrants could become entrepreneurs. Their golden opportunity: hot dogs.

Pete Koutroulakis opened one of Birmingham's first hot dog stands in 1929, using winnings from a late-night pinochle game to buy a narrow little storefront on 2nd Avenue North. He used the rest of his money to purchase a neon sign to hang above the door and christened his new venture Pete's Famous. Pete ran his namesake stand for nineteen years before he died in 1948. Today, Pete's nephew, Constantine "Gus" Koutroulakis, is the man behind the counter. Gus started working the year his uncle died, and he's been grilling hot dogs ever since.

At about the same time that Pete Koutroulakis opened Pete's Famous, German immigrant R.L. Zeigler was operating a small grocery store in Bessemer, just outside Birmingham, where he sold homemade pork sausage. It became so popular that he opened a processing plant in 1927, and his Zeigler brand of wieners started appearing in buns all over Birmingham.

As more Greeks got into the business of selling hot dogs, competition spurred innovation, and a special kind of sauce began appearing on Birmingham dogs. Greek hot dog vendors were experimenting with recipes to make this iconic American street food their own, and the result was a tangy red concoction that is ubiquitous around Birmingham today. No one's quite sure who originated the sauce, and the recipe remains a secret, but all of the versions start with a ketchup-vinegar base, onions, cumin, and oregano. In the words of George Sarris, owner of the Fish Market restaurant and son of a former hot dog vendor, their approach to hot dogs was to "Greek [them] up a little bit." But the hot dogs are special, too. A Birmingham-style hot dog is grilled and topped with mustard, sauerkraut, onions, and sauce.

In the 1950s and '60s, the hot dog business was in full swing. One family, the Graphoses, was responsible for three different stands: Lyric Hot Dogs, Jimmy's Hot Dogs, and Sneaky Pete's. Pete Graphos opened Sneaky Pete's on 8th Avenue South in 1966. Business there was so good that he opened a second location in Homewood, a suburb of Birmingham, in 1970. But his success didn't end there. Two decades after he sold his first hot dog, there were twenty-four Sneaky Pete's locations in the Magic City. In 1986, Pete sold his hot dog franchise, and the new owners expanded

A Birmingham hot dog. Photo courtesy Amy Evans.

the hot dog kingdom all the way to Atlanta.

But bigger isn't always better. Pete's Famous is still in its original location downtown, which is a shoebox of a building. The interior is a couple of feet wider than the door. People file in like coins in a slot, bellying up to the counter to order a piece of Birmingham history. It's standing room only at Pete's, and customers are packed in like sardines at peak hours. The place is hallowed ground for hot dog fans, and its owner, Gus Koutroulakis, is its patron saint. For four decades, he has stood behind the grill, passing hot dogs and one-liners over the counter. At eighty years old, he has grilled a lot of dogs. He's worked seven days a week for forty years, and the only thing that's really changed are the hours he keeps. For decades, Pete's was open from six in the morning to eleven at night. In the 1980s, Gus decided to scale back, opening at eleven and closing at six. He's still there seven days a week, carrying on a Birmingham tradition.

But the future of this Birmingham landmark hangs in the balance. When Gus goes, he'll take his sauce recipe with him and a link to the history of Greek-owned hot dog stands will be lost. Until then, Gus will be doing the same thing he's done every day and waiting for someone to break the record of eighteen hot dogs eaten in one visit.

If you're not from Birmingham, you may not have any idea that Greek immigrants have made such a lasting contribution to the city's culinary history. As an old Sneaky Pete's advertising slogan boasts, the way Greeks make hot dogs in Birmingham is "the way hot dogs should be." ❖

GRAPICO: BIRMINGHAM'S HOUSE WINE

Amy Evans

Grapico is the unofficial drink of choice for washing down a Birmingham hot dog. In 1917, New Orleans-based J. Grossman's Sons created and marketed the grape-flavored soft drink, falsely advertising that it contained real grape juice. They lost their trademark in 1929 as a result. But a Birmingham bottler of Grapico, R.R. Rochell, continued producing the beverage at his Grapico Bottling Works. Rochell obtained a trademark for the drink in 1940. In 1981, an independent Pepsi bottler in Birmingham, Buffalo Rock, acquired the brand. Through the 1980s, Grapico was only distributed in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia. Today, it's found throughout the Southeast. But the best place to enjoy Grapico is at the counter at Pete's Famous, where it's still sold in bottles. If you order one, they'll hand you what they jokingly call a bottle of their house wine. A hot dog from Pete's and a bottle of Grapico is an intoxicating combination, to be sure. ❖

Amy C. Evans is oral historian for the Southern Foodways Alliance, headquartered at the University of Mississippi.

Photo courtesy Amy Evans.

EATING EIERDACH

Sherry Hamilton

My mother's family of Swiss Mennonites is originally from Berne, Switzerland. They moved to Tennessee in the 1940s, settling in Ethridge. Working many late evenings on the farm, we often had Eierdach for supper. It was quick enough to prepare and used ingredients easily found in the pantry.

My mother said her father especially liked the recipe because it would feed a large family for very little money. Her father was a beekeeper, and many times they would use honey instead of syrup, but the preferred way to eat Eierdach is with homemade syrup. These egg pancakes are similar to the French crepe and are prepared much the same way. I actually never saw a thick pancake until I was in the eighth grade and spent the night with a friend. I had to ask what we were having for breakfast because I had never eaten thick, fluffy pancakes before.

For Eierdach, store-bought syrup just isn't the same as homemade. I owned and operated a bakery and restaurant for a number of years, and we served Eierdach on our breakfast menu. Along with the order of Eierdach came a quick lesson on how to eat them. The trick is to spread the pancake with butter and roll it up using one tine of a fork. After you have rolled each pancake, you add the syrup.

RECIPE

Eierdach

2 eggs
½ cup milk
½ cup self-rising flour
Pinch of salt
Pinch of sugar

Mix thoroughly, incorporating all ingredients. Lightly grease a hot skillet and add one ladle of batter, over medium heat. Pick up the skillet and spread the batter around to cover the entire pan. When the batter is slightly bubbly, flip the pancake. After a few seconds, it should be done. The pan will need to be lightly greased between each pancake. These are very quick to cook and should be watched carefully. We always used a cast-iron skillet.

Homemade Syrup

1 ½ cups sugar
1 cup water
Maple flavoring to taste

Mix sugar and water in a saucepan, stir to dissolve sugar, and heat to boiling. Add maple flavoring to taste. Boil for a couple of minutes. Store, covered, in the refrigerator.

Sherry Hamilton, originally from Ethridge, Tennessee, earned a bachelor's degree in food science and dietetics at Middle Tennessee State University and is pursuing a master's degree in clinical nutrition at East Tennessee State University.

THE STONEY CREEK PRIMITIVE BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONAL MEETING AND DINNER ON THE GROUND

Martha Whaley

"I never could hold my water," said Aunt Lula as she perched on the wooden seat. I was wide eyed. What water? Why was she holding it? Where was she holding it? "Do ye need to go?" she asked. I shook my head wordlessly and watched as Aunt Lula adjusted her clothing. She wore a navy blue shirtwaist dress with functional flat buttons in a single line all the way from her throat to the mid-calf hem. I noticed she did not wear a girdle to hold up her hose as my mother did. Instead, the opaque, fleshy stockings were rolled and twisted into a knot just below her knee. Her shoes were black lace-ups with a medium square heel—a style preferred by most of the middle-aged and elderly women who attended Aunt Lula's church. My mother called these shoes "Old Lady Comforts," and she "wouldn't be caught dead in them."

Aunt Lula led me out of the dim outhouse and down a stone path to the front yard of the church. Children ran, shouted, and threw pebbles in the creek. Women and girls retrieved covered dishes from an assortment of well-used but clean and polished Fords, Chevys, and an occasional Buick. Men and big boys carried the slatted benches that served as church pews out the church door and down the steps. Some benches were already situated in the shade, and a few stood under the sparsely scattered trees. It was mid-day in mid-August, so every scrap of shade would be used.

Aunt Lula and I walked across the creek on a narrow bridge barely wide enough for one car. We climbed several steps to a long front porch. This was the home of a friendly neighbor who offered the use of her refrigerator to congregants of the Stoney Creek Primitive Baptist Associational Meeting and Dinner on the Ground. Without knocking, Aunt Lula entered the house and reclaimed the food she had prepared.

As we walked back across the bridge, I observed two long rows of benches with seats facing and touching each other. Women were placing food on them. It looked and smelled wonderful, but as a six-year-old, I was not quite tall enough to lean over the backs of the benches to reach it. Maybe some of that crispy, golden fried chicken would be piled high on the platter so I could snare a top piece.

Aunt Lula placed her fried pork tenderloin, gravy, and a large plate of cathead biscuits on a bench. Then she turned to me and said, "Now, honey, jist come right over here and be real quiet while the preacher turns thanks." I considered her words throughout the long list of recounted blessings and requests for blessings. "Turn thanks." What could it mean?

The prayer was over, the pastor and his wife were summoned to the front, and the line divided smoothly on each side of the double row of benches. Aunt Lula and I stepped to the back of the line and moved along inch-by-inch, step-by-step. I pictured myself stretching over the back of a bench, digging

Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

into some lovely, buttered mashed potatoes and tumbling head first into a big bowl of something yucky, like stewed turnips, while a pyramid of corn on the cob went rolling off the benches and onto the grass.

As the line crept even more slowly, I became convinced nothing would remain except one deviled egg. I decided Aunt Lula could just have it. I didn't like deviled eggs unless they were made with my mother's fourteen-day sweet pickles.

When we finally reached the food, Aunt Lula handed a limp-looking paper plate to me. "Now, honey, you jist hold onto this here plate and tell me what you want and I'll git it fer ye." Things were looking up. But now I had another problem. My mother had said, "You must be very quiet. Just whisper to Aunt Lula if you need anything."

I pointed to a plate of country ham swimming in redeye gravy. A large piece went on my plate, which I was holding with both hands. "What else?" Now I couldn't point. I tried to indicate my desire for some creamed corn. "Soup beans?" asked Aunt Lula. I shook my head vigorously from side-to-side. "Corn?" I nodded. In this manner we made our way past platters of roast beef, bowls of fried Golden Delicious apples, plates of sliced homegrown tomatoes, and a variety of fresh green beans well-seasoned with ham and fatback.

We sat on a bench and I managed to balance the plate well enough to eat most of the contents. Aunt Lula left me for just a moment and brought back a piece of chocolate cake and a bowl of banana pudding. I reached for both. She smiled, handed them to me, and went back for another dessert for herself.

After Aunt Lula had delivered me safely home later that day, I watched my mother peel potatoes for supper. "How did you like Aunt Lula's church?" she asked.

"I had to sit on my feet."

"Why on earth was that?"

"The people were all washing each other's feet, and I didn't want them to wash mine."

"Oh honey, they wouldn't have washed your feet. Only adults who are members of the church wash each other's feet."

"Why do they do that?"

"It's called a church ordinance. They do it to follow the example of Jesus, who washed the disciples' feet."

"Mama, what does it mean to turn thanks? And where is Aunt Lula holding her water? And...."

"Hold on, hold on. One question at a time, please." Dinner on the ground had been more than just a meal. ❖

Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

"CHEESE SALAD" FOR THE PROFESSOR

MARTHA WHALEY

My mother's pimento cheese was just as much a family reunion staple as fresh green beans and thick-sliced garden tomatoes. She always made it early in the morning on the day of the family reunion. Then she spread just the right amount between two slices of white Rainbo bread, cut the sandwiches diagonally in two, and placed them in the empty bread bag, carefully replacing the plastic twist tie. The same procedure was used in the event of a death in the community. Mama always said when folks were grieving, they didn't want to be bothered with fixing a plate of meat and vegetables. They just wanted something they could pick up and eat quickly without thinking.

It is entirely possible that Mama's pimento cheese is now famous in the British Isles. During the late 1980s, the History of Medicine Society of Appalachia hosted a visiting lecturer from London. A picnic lunch at Watauga Lake in Carter County, Tennessee, was planned for the professor and his wife, and I decided to take Mama along. Her contribution was a pint of pimento cheese in a Tupperware container and a box of Ritz crackers. For as long as she lived, Mama loved to tell about how the professor, after we had finished our lunch, scooped out a big spoonful of the pimento cheese, proceeded to eat it with his fork, and said, between mouthfuls, "This cheese salad is wonderful!"

The pimento cheese recipe was Mama's own invention. As one who shuddered at the very thought of mayonnaise, she revised many recipes to omit the gloppy, greasy white stuff.

RECIPE

Mama's Pimento Cheese

Grate 1 pound of Velveeta. It's soft and doesn't grate cleanly, but do your best. Then grate 1 pound of American cheese. (Mama liked to use the Kraft American cheese in the blue box, but I haven't been able to find it for several years, so I buy a block of American cheese at the deli.) Add one 4-ounce jar of chopped pimentos. Mix well. Add the following mixture, a spoonful at a time, until the cheese is spreadable.

The Magic Mixture

In a measuring cup, put 1/2 cup granulated sugar and 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar. Add 3 tablespoons of water and mix until the sugar is dissolved. (Mama used this in deviled eggs, egg salad, chicken salad, and as a coleslaw dressing.)

Serve the pimento cheese at room temperature. It keeps well in the refrigerator, but I don't know how long. It usually disappears after two or three days at my house.

Martha Whaley is a Carter County, Tennessee, native who remembers all her mother's recipes with reverence and respect even though she long ago gave up "streaked meat" and fried potatoes. Her grandfather was a Primitive Baptist minister who preached at churches throughout upper East Tennessee. Martha is technical services coordinator and History of Medicine librarian at East Tennessee State University's Quillen College of Medicine Library.

Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

DINNER ON THE GROUND:
A SECULAR VERSION, WITH FRIED POTATOES ON THE ROAN

Susan Shelton

One shining example of making an ordinary meal into an extraordinary food experience was my grandmother's love of the Sunday picnic. Almost every week of my growing up years, my mother, Wynona Holland, got up early and began to cook as the rest of us fought to get ready for church with only one bathroom in the house. The minute the preacher gave the benediction, we rushed home, grabbed up what had been cooked that morning, and headed twenty-five miles to my grandparents' house to eat together.

If it was any kind of warm day, my grandmother wanted to eat on the ground, mountain-speak for picnicking. My kin never mastered the art of a simple picnic meal, thrown together for the fun of it, and cold food was out of the question as the menfolk required hearty fare. And no matter what the menu called for, my grandmother would not leave the house without fried potatoes.

My Grandmother Bonnie Barnett's fried potatoes were slivered into perfect parallelograms, baptized in Valleydale lard and bacon drippings, then fried to golden brown in her biggest cast-iron skillet. The potatoes were the last thing to be prepared and loaded into the car, skillet and all, where newspapers were laid out ready to receive the smoldering pan.

Grandmother's favorite picnic places were on Roan Mountain in East Tennessee. Along the winding road leading to the top were several picnic areas carved from the hillside under the road. After parking, and loaded down with food, we began the treacherous climb down the hill. A narrow gravel goat path led to concrete picnic tables and the ubiquitous built-in grills, where the charred remnants of mysterious meals lingered forever.

An old chenille bedspread was used as the tablecloth. The food was spread out by my mother's deft hand like a Vegas blackjack dealer preparing his table for play. Disposable plates and utensils were unheard of. Only heavy Buffalo china and real silverware were ever used, even outdoors. An old Homer Laughlin plate from the '40s with faded flowers and a flaking, gold-plated rim was always my special plate at Grandmother's table. Spring-fed water fountains were scattered about, and we drank ice-cold water from the top of the mountain.

And in the center of every table was a skillet full of fried potatoes. The surrounding dishes varied from season to season, from country ham and stewed apples to chicken and dumplings and fried squash, but the potatoes were constant. Whatever was coming in from the garden was offered up, too, most always a plate of sliced tomatoes, even though my grandfather thought them poisonous. But no altar was set up on the mountain without an offering of fried potatoes.

My grandmother was so fond of picnics that my grandfather created a small eating area near their house, just across the road below the bank at the mailbox. There, beside the roaring creek, my grandfather, a carpenter by trade, constructed a picnic table. While we no longer had to drive up the Roan to eat, we still had to carry that hot skillet of potatoes down to the water's edge, along with Grandmother's homemade biscuit bread, in order to make our family picnics complete. ❖

Susan Shelton is a graduate student in the master of arts in liberal studies program at East Tennessee State University.

Illustration by Samuel Crowe.

PLATTERS AND PERMANENCE WALK AND TALK A-PLENTY AT SPARTANBURG'S BEACON

Susan Shelton

In the Appalachian upland of South Carolina some things are certain. The summers are hot and the line will be moving along at the Beacon Drive-In. For over three generations, this pantheon of burgers and shakes has drawn the faithful from all of Spartanburg and the world beyond.

On Thanksgiving Day 1946, a young World War II veteran opened the door to a new eatery with the motto, "Where Food Is Always Good." Over the intervening years, the Beacon has become a local and national icon. The landmark lighthouse, rising three stories above the huge parking lot, tells the hungry hordes they have arrived. Lured by the expansive menu, which includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner, a varied customer base has enjoyed the Beacon's food for more than sixty years. A social salad of young and old, rich and poor, blue-collar and professional, regulars and tourists can be found huddled together in wide-open, noisy dining rooms where 350 people can eat at one time. It is an oasis of comfort, constancy, and companionship.

Founder John White had always enjoyed the reputation of being a generous and caring employer and community leader. Stories abound about his providing food to those in need, whether from natural disaster or hard times. On one occasion, he fed 300 fellow sailors free of charge. In 1977, when a downtown Spartanburg building collapsed, killing five people, White rushed to the scene with a truckload of food and drink to support the recovery effort. In recognition of his contributions to the community, a four-mile portion of Reidsville Road, the location of the Beacon, was renamed John B. White, Sr. Boulevard in 1998.

The Beacon is not only a gathering place for the entire community, it has also become a mandatory stop in any politician's quest to drum up votes for a successful campaign. Local and state office-seekers make it a point to glad-hand in the eatery, and even presidential candidates, among them Jimmy Carter, Bob Dole, Ross Perot, John McCain, Howard Dean, and George W. Bush, have passed down the line for a cheeseburger-all-the-way.

Julia Roberts, Garrison Keillor, and the contestants of the television program "The Amazing Race" have eaten there. Miss South Carolina contestants are routinely paraded in during pageant week. On one memorable evening, the entire cast of the Broadway production of *Cats* arrived in full costume after a performance at the Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium. White treated all the feline diners to a complimentary banana split.

The Beacon menu has changed very little over the decades. The number-one-selling chili cheeseburger continues to reign supreme, with the ubiquitous beef hash following at a close second. Entrees ordered "a-plenty" come buried in a mountain of French fries and hand-breaded Vidalia onion rings. Each week, three tons of both potatoes and onions are

"Walk and talk," says J.C.Stroble. Photo courtesy Susan Shelton.

consumed by the restaurant's patrons. The average weight of a burger platter comes in at over two pounds of deep-fried wonderment.

All burgers at the Beacon come fully-equipped with lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise—South Carolina's Duke's, of course. Mustard is available only in packet form, and ketchup is dispensed from one-gallon cans which are opened in the dining room with gigantic can openers like those on naval vessels or in prison kitchens. Two hundred such containers are emptied in a week's time.

The newest entry on the menu is the "Hushpopper," a puffy cornmeal hush puppy stuffed with homemade jalapeño pimento cheese, served with a creamy chipotle dipping sauce.

The Beacon claims to serve more sweet tea than any other restaurant in the country. Longtime employee Robert Nash brews over 1,200 gallons per week, sweetening it with more than 3,000 pounds of sugar. Each of the four large dining halls is equipped with a huge vat of the syrupy nectar.

Satisfying and decadent food is not the only driving force behind the success of the Beacon. Among a team of some sixty employees, workplace turnover is virtually non-existent. The average career at the Beacon spans twenty-eight years.

White's generosity toward his employees is well-documented. It was common for him to loan money with no expectation of re-payment. Cars were provided to insure reliable transportation to work, college educations were financed, and even homes were provided to those in need. Such magnanimous gestures were repaid with utter loyalty, and that spirit of fidelity continues today.

The undisputed king of the Beacon is J.C. Stroble, who has worked there since age fourteen, despite being legally blind. Fifty years ago, he explains, there were few employment options for young black men. He chose carhopping over working in the peach orchards or being a caddy at the local golf club. Since there was no indoor dining in the early years, carhops were the main line of defense against the onslaught of diners who flocked to the Beacon.

These days, J.C., at sixty-six, is considered the "ambassador" of the Beacon, having been featured in numerous local and national publications as well as television shows. The most recognized person in the restaurant, he can be found every day at the head of the line, arriving promptly at eleven o'clock, dressed spotlessly in a starched white shirt and pants, a crisp white apron, and polished black shoes.

J.C. says his primary job is to keep the line moving, so you'd better have read the menu and know what you want before you appear at the head of the line. As diners approach, he greets them with his famous, "Walk and talk." He then bellows out the order to the prep crew waiting behind the counter, followed by "Call it." Each cook is attuned to the sound of J.C.'s call, and those not receiving an order have learned to tune him out until the next order is called. In other words, the sandwich makers pay no attention as a burger order is shouted out, and the burger man doesn't listen when the order is for fried catfish. Amid the noise and chaos, somehow, miraculously, diners receive their order correctly at the pick-up area. Nothing is written down. It's just a well-rehearsed symphony of cooperation and food preparation.

J.C. receives compliments from those entering the line, which he graciously acknowledges with a "Thanks a lot" or "I love you, too, honey." He's never met a stranger.

Another indispensable member of the Beacon family is Betty McClurkin. Known to all as "Miss Betty," she has been at the restaurant for forty-two years and is in charge of the kitchen. Everything on the menu is made from scratch, and nearly all of the

Photo courtesy Susan Shelton.

recipes are Betty's. She does all the baking and has been known to cater a meal for 400 single-handedly. During Thanksgiving week, she roasts more than 400 pre-ordered turkeys. Never seen by the customers, Miss Betty is the secret force behind the homemade pimento cheese, chicken stew, and pecan pie. Mr. White always said that he once prayed for someone to run his kitchen, and Miss Betty was sent to him from God.

Ezell Jackson, who began at the Beacon in 1950, worked as a carhop for forty-six years, until he was ninety. Willie Farmer served for fifty-three years, starting on the second day of business in 1946. Thomas Byrd worked at the Beacon for fifty-two years. It was his first and only job. James Meadows started working at the Beacon in 1952, served for forty-seven years, and never missed a day of work.

Upon Mr. White's retirement in 1998, the Beacon was sold to three local businessmen who have dedicated themselves to keeping the time-honored traditions alive. Kenny Church, the current general manager, adheres to an "If it's not broken, don't fix it" policy. Like Mr. White, the new owners consider their employees the cornerstone of the Beacon's success. And while some items have been added to the menu, a website has been launched, and outside marketing of the trademark tea began a few years ago, the current owners have no plans to make sweeping changes. They intend always to pay tribute to the man who built a hamburger empire with nothing but a vision and his often-quoted philosophy: "Anybody can do the ordinary. The Beacon strives to do the impossible." ❖

Susan Shelton visited the Beacon as part of an oral history project for the "Foodways of Appalachia" course at East Tennessee State University.

BEANS ALL THE WAY

Joel Waddell

Bean Barn, Greeneville, Tennessee. Photo courtesy Larry Smith.

The Bean Barn is a landmark in Greeneville, Tennessee, where, for twenty-seven years, Jerry and Donna Hartsell have served breakfast and lunch. Despite celebrity status, Jerry and Donna have remained humble, down-to-earth people.

Besides the unparalleled burgers, soup beans, and beef stew, the most notable aspect of this one-of-a-kind restaurant is Jerry's antique collection. He says he began to develop an interest in antiques about ten years after he bought the business from his sister and brother-in-law.

The Bean Barn is more than just a restaurant. It is a museum filled with artifacts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Jerry gets his antiques from all over. He frequents old stores, flea markets, antique shows, and antique shops. Individual customers will even give him antiques.

When asked to identify his favorite antique in the restaurant, he pointed across the room and said,

"That antique over there, I like her pretty good." He was pointing at his wife Donna. The room exploded with laughter.

Customers don't just come to the Bean Barn for the great food and antiques. They also come because of Jerry and Donna.

Adding to the atmosphere of the Bean Barn are Hartsell family pictures, more of the Hartsells' grandson than anyone else. Jerry calls it his grandson's shrine.

Nowhere else but the Bean Barn can you find a Hobart, a double cheeseburger with ham. Before the Hartsells took over the restaurant, the sandwich was only available upon request.

The Hartsells cook beans exactly like the previous owners, the Britt family. They're seasoned with lard. Jerry bought the place from his brother-in-law, Danny Britt, and Danny's wife Donna. They had carried on the bean recipe Danny's father, Romie Britt, had created with his wife Zella Mae. After Jerry took over, his sister stayed on for a week to show him how to cook the beans.

The Bean Barn's trademark dish and claim to fame is "Beans All the Way," a soup beans-beef stew hybrid. This Romie Britt original begins with a large spoonful of homemade beef stew. Then soup beans are ladled into the bowl, and chopped onions are scattered on top. For the most part, the Hartsells make their food just like the Britt family did fifty years ago. The restaurant first opened in another section of Greeneville in the 1940s.

The equipment for preparing the food has also remained much the same. When it comes to equipment, Jerry says he is "about as old school as they get." He still prepares burgers with the Britt family's ancient grill. It was an antique when he took over.

Aside from changing the thermostat several times, Jerry employs the same deep-fryer the Britts used. Even the steam table remains unchanged. But Jerry did purchase a "new" coffee machine fifteen years ago.

Even though the restaurant closes at two o'clock in the afternoon, a great deal of work has to be done before the four employees can go home. Jerry is responsible for cleaning up the grill area, and he does all of the janitorial work. Every weekday afternoon, he goes to multiple grocery stores to purchase everything needed for the following day.

The type of commitment needed to keep the Bean Barn open is born out of a passion for food. Jerry never planned on going into the restaurant business, but when he got the opportunity, he decided to make something of it. As a young man working for Free Service Tire Company, he decided to take a cooking class and first discovered his skill in the kitchen. His teacher even told him he was a natural.

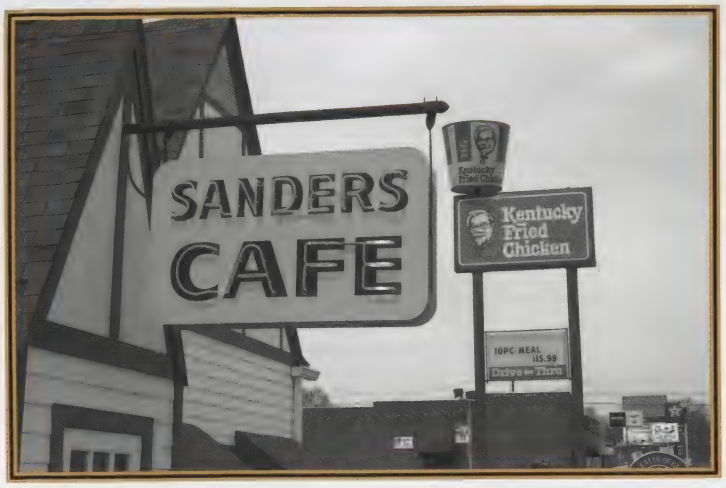
Jerry says when a regular customer walks through the door, he can predict the order. When he and Donna see one of their customers out in town, they might not always know the person's name, but they will definitely know what that person prefers on a cheeseburger. Jerry says when college kids come home from the University of Tennessee, they will stop by the Bean Barn before they go home to see their parents.

The Bean Barn is an important part of the culture in Greeneville. It serves as a catalyst for social cohesion within the community. Not just a restaurant, it's a place where people with common interests come together. It's the family table of Greeneville. ❖

Joel Waddell graduated from Greeneville High School in 2002. He is now a senior biology major at East Tennessee State University, where he completed an oral history project on the Bean Barn for a "Foodways of Appalachia" class.

A DISCRIMINATING PALATE

Julia Watts



"You want buttermilk or sweet milk?"

I'd be on the naugahyde sofa, staring at the frequently rerun images of Granny and Jed and Jethro on the television set which masqueraded as a clunky piece of Mediterranean-style furniture. The fact was, I wanted neither sweet milk nor buttermilk, but for minors, those were the only beverages offered. Since I couldn't stand the thought of buttermilk coating my throat the same way it coated a glass, I'd ask for sweet milk.

From my toddlerhood through my teenage years, this ritual never changed. Neither did the foods that constituted supper at Nana and Papaw's: pinto beans, corn bread, silky, lard-fried potatoes, soupy macaroni and cheese, and cabbage or greens. Though every item dipped off the stove contained pork fat of one kind or another, more often than not, meat didn't figure into the equation. Retired after years of hard work, Papaw and Nana could have afforded it, but having grown up in coal camps and then lived through the Depression and the war, they had not lost the tastes of people who have to make a little go a long way.

To my knowledge, Nana never made a green salad except for the occasional bowl of green Jell-O with canned fruit suspended in it like insects in amber. In the summer, sliced cucumbers doused in vinegar were her one concession to the category of green and crunchy.

As a pre-adolescent, I ate whatever was put in front of me. I liked Mom's cooking and Nana's cooking, and if we ventured to a neighboring town for a meal at Shoney's or Pizza Hut, I liked that, too. But as a teenager, I developed tastes more discriminating. Even though I loved my family, I felt restricted by my small-town Appalachian upbringing. Fueled in the 1980s by a steady diet of MTV and movies and novels featuring urban sophisticates, I wanted to leave rural Appalachia for the "bright lights, big city."

I was desperately seeking identity, and there was no room for the kind of food Nana cooked in my vision of myself and my future. I was pretty sure Woody Allen didn't sit down to beans and corn bread for his after-theatre meal at Elaine's. And I hated how tight the waist of my acid-washed jeans felt after a plateful of pintos. I started referring to Nana's genre of cooking as "hick food," though never to her face, because I knew I couldn't grow up to be an urban sophisticate if Nana didn't let me live to see my next birthday.

The food I loved at the time was the kind of fare an unsophisticated teenager finds sophisticated. When Mom and Dad would take me on day trips to Knoxville, Tennessee, I gloried in all the restaurants that were allegedly ethnic: the chain Japanese steak house where knife-juggling chefs turned the preparation of sticky-sweet chicken teriyaki into dinner theatre; a pseudo-Mexican Casa del Something-or-Another where Caucasian college

Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

girls in cantina costumes served dinners drenched in day-glow orange cheese. I was enamored of coconut chicken at T.G.I. Friday's, though in retrospect, I'm pretty sure the accompanying dipping sauce was actually Hawaiian Tropic suntan lotion.

It was during this period of my straining toward sophistication when a Chinese restaurant opened in Corbin, Kentucky, the town where I attended high school. Corbin had earned its place on the culinary map as the home of the original Kentucky Fried Chicken, but the Colonel's offerings were too prosaic for my burgeoning palate. With all due respect to the nice people who worked at the Hunan in Corbin in the '80s, it was not a very good Chinese restaurant. Mainly a buffet, it offered only the most basic Chinese-American fare so as not to scare off the locals: sweet and sour pork, moo goo gai pan, pepper steak, egg rolls, and fried wontons. In an attempt to cater to southeastern Kentuckian tastes, the buffet was always stocked with a loaf of white bread and a large squeeze bottle of French's mustard. Everything cooked at the Hunan was greasy and so full of MSG that by the time I finished eating, I felt like my head was full of buzzing bees.

I loved it.

One evening, as I was enjoying the crispness of the cabbage in the moo goo gai pan, I thought of how Nana and Papaw lived only a few miles away and had never tasted Chinese food. They had never experienced vegetables that were cooked quickly so they still crunched, or meat in tiny, tender chunks.

I knew Nana would never try it. Her personality was contrary at best, and one of the ways she manifested her considerable xenophobia was by refusing to eat anything different from the food she had eaten since childhood. Once, after eating at the Mexi-American restaurant on a day trip to Knoxville, I told Nana I had eaten fried ice cream. A thirty-minute argument ensued as she insisted such a thing could not exist.

Papaw, though lacking in formal education, was more curious and less judgmental. While Nana spent my teenage years handing me newspaper clippings about the horrors of teen pregnancy and drug use, Papaw seemed more confident that I had enough sense to keep myself out of trouble. Sure, I might do inexplicable things like wear jeans with holes I had purposely cut in the knees, but basically I was a good kid.

Zealot that I was, I wanted to convert Papaw to culinary sophistication. Waiting until Nana was out of earshot, I broached the topic when he and I were washing the supper dishes in the kitchen. "I was wondering if you might like to try the new Chinese restaurant over in Corbin."

"We could do that, I reckon," Papaw said, handing me a dish to rinse. "Just let me know when you want to go, buddy."

We went at lunchtime that Saturday. The Hunan's building was a small brick house from the 1930s that had been remodeled, rather shoddily, as commercial space. The inside walls were made of the thinnest, cheapest paneling available, with a few tacked-on Chinese fans and calendars as decoration. It looked like a set from an on-the-cheap high school production of *Teahouse of the August Moon*.

Papaw wasn't looking at the place but the people: the pretty young woman who seated us, the spiky-haired young man who loaded a fresh tray of moo goo gai pan onto the buffet, the old lady sitting in the back corner wrapping napkins around silverware. I didn't know how many Asians Papaw had seen in person, but I figured he'd never seen so many in one place.

When the same young lady who had seated us came to ask what we wanted to drink, I ordered hot tea because the tiny, elegant pot and cup always enchanted me. Papaw wanted coffee, as he did with every meal. When the waitress left, he said, "Her hair's right pretty. You don't see hair that black on white people. Ma Cooper's hair was about that dark when she was young. 'Course, she was a quarter Cherokee."

I led him to the buffet and, in my authoritative teenaged voice, explained about the rice and the different dishes and the sweet and sour sauce. When we got to the egg rolls, he said, "I've heard tell of these on TV, but they don't look how I pictured. They got eggs in 'em?"

"Not really." I pointed out a sign on the buffet that should have said "Hunan shrimp" but said "Human shrimp" instead.

"I ain't afraid to try some new things, buddy," Papaw said. "But I ain't going that far."

I took a little of everything. Papaw chose fried rice, an egg roll, and pepper steak. The pepper steak didn't surprise me. When Nana and Papaw went to the Western Steer for special occasions, he always ordered the beef tips with peppers and onions.

"I ain't eat much rice, unless it was sweet," Papaw said before taking a forkful of pepper steak and pronouncing it "pretty good." After biting into his egg roll, he said, "Reckon how come they don't call 'em cabbage rolls?"

When our fortune cookies arrived, I showed Papaw how to break them open. His said, "You will receive good news by mail." He stuck the fortune in his shirt pocket.

"Well," he said, "I'll give it a couple of weeks, and if it don't come true, I reckon I'll have to come back and take it up with one of them Chinamen."

If this were fiction, the Chinese lunch with my Papaw would be some kind of dramatic turning point in our relationship. It wasn't. It is a pleasant memory, though—one of the many I carry of him since he died when I was in my early twenties.

But maybe the experience was a small turning point for me—the first moment when my Appalachian roots and my desire to be a person of the world didn't feel at odds. Now, as I approach middle age, these two sides of my personality don't seem different at all.

Granted, I'm hardly the urbanite I imagined myself to be as a teenager. I live in Knoxville, not New York, but Knoxville is a surprisingly good food town. On any given weekend, you might see my family and me sampling the spicy Szechwan at Hong Kong House, the Mexican comfort food at El Charro, or the aromatic Indian offerings at Sitar.

At least one day a week, though, I indulge in a solitary vice. On my way to pick up my son at school, I stop at Wright's Cafeteria, a plain little brick building on Middlebrook Pike. Depending on what's cooking that day, I may have pinto beans and corn bread, collard greens or cabbage, and macaroni and cheese. It's been many years since I was an insecure teenager, and just as I now know that authentic ethnic food can't be found in chain restaurants, I also know that an appreciation of diverse cultures and cuisines should include one's own.

When I sit alone at Wright's, I usually have a newspaper or magazine open in front of me. But most of the time, I just pretend to read. Many of the patrons at Wright's are much older than I am, and they remind me of my grandparents. I like to listen to them. ❖

A native of southeastern Kentucky, Julia Watts is the author of *Kindred Spirits*, an Appalachian novel for young readers, and seven other Appalachian novels for big people. She teaches at South College in Knoxville, Tennessee.

SEEKING THE SWEET LIFE ON THE STATE LINE

Lisa Elliott

At ninety-eight years old, there are not too many things Frank Loudy hasn't witnessed in Washington County, Virginia. He has led an amazing life, which included a tour of duty in Europe during World War II and the creation of a candy factory in Bristol. Frank is a living history book, and he represents the American dream.

Born in 1911 in Washington County, Frank and his twin sister were the youngest of John and Sallie Loudy's six children. The Loudy family lived on a farm where they raised livestock, vegetables, and fruit trees. Since John was fifty years old when Frank was born, by the age of twelve Frank had assumed many responsibilities, including the castration of bulls. At fifteen, he quit school to help his parents take care of the farm.

When Frank was a young adult, his brother Henry introduced him to the business of candy-making. Frank worked in the candy business for nearly ten years before fulfilling his commitment to the United States Army during World War II. At thirty-two, he, like many other American men, "joined" the Army. According to Frank, "They joined me mostly."

He helped fight a war that brought him through Normandy a month after D-Day. He arrived home in Bristol, Virginia, in January of 1946 without having suffered so much as a scratch during the war. At the time of his homecoming, he had been married to his wife Edith for nine years.

Frank felt confident he could start his own candy company. After all, he had successfully managed a candy business in Asheville, North Carolina, during the seven years prior to his war duty. His home in Bristol had a large basement, and that's where he decided to set up shop. For two years, Frank, Edith, a few family members, and a couple of employees made candy in the Loudy basement.

The rationing of sugar during the war limited the amount of candy the Loudy Candy Company could produce, so the payroll included no more than three or four people at a time. During the basement years, Frank hand-made machinery and equipment

Frank Loudy. Photo courtesy Lisa Elliott.

for the manufacturing of candy, including a cooking machine and a cooling machine. Even though he had no formal training, through trial and error he created equipment that would mass-produce pure sugar stick candy.

After sugar rationing ended, Frank built a small plant in Bristol. In October of 1956, a fire damaged the Loudy Candy Company, but in the spirit of Appalachia, people came together to help rebuild. Since the busy holiday season had already begun, there was a strong desire to reopen as soon as possible. With the cooperation of the bank, the insurance company, the contractor, and the company that made the packaging boxes, Frank reopened nine days after the fire.

Not long thereafter, he decided to find a new location, settling on a site near what would eventually become Exit 7 of Interstate 81 in Bristol, Virginia. Loudy Candy Company occupied a permanent home there for thirty years before Frank retired and sold the business to Helms Candy Company, which continues to operate on Lee Highway. In 2009, Helms Candy celebrated its hundredth birthday.

Loudy Candy Company produced a myriad of hard candies, including a stick candy that featured flavors such as peppermint, wintergreen, vanilla, lemon, and sassafras. In addition to the popular naturally-flavored stick candy, Loudy's made peanut butter stick candy, horehound, and more. During the holiday season, which lasted six months out of the year, the company made special treats like jumbo sticks.

Frank and his employees produced 10,000 pounds of candy a day. During the early years, he sold to local retailers in Bristol and the surrounding area. After building the larger plant, he expanded his business to wholesalers in a seven-state region.

Besides sweet candies, the company made medicinal throat lozenges, requested by Massengill, then the largest pharmaceuticals company in Bristol. Shortly afterward, Frank began turning out lozenges for Robins, a national distributor of medicinal products in Richmond.

His favorite confection was peanut butter stick candy. The peanut butter used to make it was delivered in fifty-gallon barrels. According to Frank, dipping the candy stick in the barrel of peanut butter always resulted in a delectable treat. He says people still talk about the Loudy Candy Company peanut butter sticks.

Frank is a sprightly ninety-eight-year-old. Even though he has been alive for nearly a century, his memory and sharp wit could measure up against a person forty years his junior. He still lives in the home he built in the early 1960s. Behind it sits a small house he and his nephew Paul constructed from trees that had been cut down on Frank's property. This little structure was the site of many family gatherings and picnics through the years. (Frank's wife Edith died in 2002, after sixty-five years of marriage.)

Frank still wakes up every morning at four o'clock and begins preparing a breakfast of eggs, sausage, waffles, and coffee.

He has lived the American dream. He grew up on a farm in a close-knit family, and, he says, "I married the prettiest girl I'd ever seen."

He returned home to Washington County unscathed from a war in an unfamiliar land and bravely began his own company in the basement of his home. His dream of starting his own business culminated in thirty years of successful candy-making.

He looks back on that life of sweetness with satisfaction, concluding, "I have been fortunate in many ways." ❖

A native of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Lisa Elliott holds a bachelor's degree in business from Salem College in West Virginia. She is academic advisor for ETSU at Kingsport and is completing a master of arts degree in liberal studies at ETSU. Her oral history interview with Frank Loudy for the university's "Foodways of Appalachia" class evolved into a museum exhibit on the history of candy-making in Bristol in 2006.

PEPPERMINT

Michael McFee

The kindly grandfather I never had
would have a Starlight after Sunday dinner,
noisily untwisting the cellophane
then placing that Christmas tablet on his tongue
and sucking it (his cheeks caved-in just slightly)
until the merry candy was unstriped
and starting to grow thinner in his mouth,

a once-full moon riddled with cheesy holes
or ice plug melted to the sweetest sliver
he'd slip forward between his big incisors
and crisply crunch in half, in half again
till it was nothing but a memory
confectioning the lips he'd kiss us with,
that kindly grandfather I never had.

Michael McFee has published thirteen books, most recently *The Napkin Manuscripts: Selected Essays and an Interview* (University of Tennessee Press, 2006) and a chapbook of one-line poems, *The Smallest Talk* (Bull City Press, 2007). He received the 2009 James Still Award for Writing about the Appalachian South from the Fellowship of Southern Writers.

Photo courtesy Samuel Crowe.

SQUISHED BISCUITS AND A BIRTHDAY CAKE FOR BABY JESUS: THE FOOD-FILLED LIFE OF CARSIE LODTER

Renee McNeely

Daughter, wife, mother, teacher, prize-winning cultivator of roses, expert seamstress, and accomplished cook. These are the many hats worn by Carsie Hyder Lodter. Born and raised in Carter County, she is deeply rooted in East Tennessee and proud of her heritage.

The first member of her family who came to America in 1729 was Michael Hyder, her great-great-great-great grandfather, who helped protect the Watauga settlement at Sycamore Shoals from the Indians.

Carsie says she was blessed to have two parents who were both college graduates. This was an uncommon situation in Appalachia during that era. Her parents had met while both attended Milligan College, and they would continue to be associated with that institution for many years. Her father became a teacher of mathematics there. The family moved next to the campus when Carsie was just a toddler.

"I had an interesting childhood growing up there in that community, being as close to the campus as I was and having opportunities that probably a lot of children wouldn't have had."

Not only did her parents place great emphasis on education, but they also insisted she and her siblings learn to play the piano and study elocution. She and her brother took those talents throughout the community and performed for groups such as Kiwanis. She attended the very first Happy Valley Elementary School and continued there through the sixth grade.

She was exposed to higher education again when she was only ten years old, as her father pursued his master's degree during the summertime at the University of Tennessee.

To further her own education, Carsie chose the campus of East Tennessee State Teachers College, thus beginning a lifetime relationship with the institution. The college had a demonstration school, which meshed perfectly with her father's hopes for his daughter's education. She would attend the Training School throughout her junior high years, but she had to seek other options for completing high school. No higher grades were available at the Training School. Science Hill High School in Johnson City would be the answer, and she would graduate from there in 1936.

It was only appropriate that she continue the legacy of her parents and attend Milligan College. "When I graduated from high school, I started what was my life ambition and that was to go to college," she says. "I had grown up on the campus practically at Milligan and I wanted to go to college. That was my dream."

She flourished at Milligan, engaging in as many activities as possible from singing in the glee club to participating in the drama club and debate team.

Carsie Lodter, far right, at Kappa Omicron Phi function, East Tennessee State University. Second from left is Dr. D. P. Culp, President of ETSU from 1968 to 1977.

She was careful, all the while, never to let outside activities interfere with her pursuit of a degree in home economics. She hoped to work in an experimental laboratory kitchen such as the one at General Mills in Johnson City. She got the idea from her mother, who, along with other ladies at Hopwood Christian Church, earned extra money to renovate the church building by testing recipes for General Mills, once known as The Model Mill.

"My mother would get this recipe to test and then she had to fill out a long questionnaire about it, send it back to General Mills, and receive a check," Carsie recalled.

This career option intrigued her since it would have allowed her to apply a home economics degree in a challenging way, possibly with the Good Housekeeping Institute. Only one thing would obstruct her long-term goals of pursuing her master's degree at the University of Tennessee and beginning a career in an experimental kitchen laboratory. That was love.

While a student at Milligan, she met, dated, and fell in love with a young professor of foreign languages from Rhode Island, Edward Lodter.

"I had a real dilemma because the week after I graduated, I had my proposal for marriage and I didn't know what to do," she remembers. Carsie consulted her father for counsel. He told her the mere fact that she was indecisive was an indication that she shouldn't be hasty with her commitment to marriage. She did go on to UT for the summer semester, but the absence of Edward convinced her she was ready to change her life's plans for the man she loved.

That fall she began making wedding plans, accepted a job teaching home economics at Elizabethton High School, and settled into married life. When a dramatic decrease in enrollment occurred at Milligan after World War II, Edward accepted the position of chairman of the department and professor of foreign languages at East Tennessee State. Carsie adjusted to life as a faculty wife and, by then, mother.

"Mrs. Ada Hornsby Earnest, who was my junior high teacher, knew that I was a faculty wife then at the university, and she needed somebody to spearhead a summer workshop in child development," Carsie remembered.

That workshop would be the introduction into an educational career at East Tennessee State for Carsie herself. Mrs. Earnest was chair of the home economics department, and Carsie found herself right at home there. She had audited the nutrition course, which was Mrs. Earnest's area of expertise. Carsie completed her master's degree at East Tennessee State and the fifteen additional graduate hours required to be a faculty member.

In 1963, the year East Tennessee State reached university status, she became a permanent instructor. She would eventually teach textiles and clothing, her specialty, along with nutrition, until she retired in 1982. One of her proudest achievements while on the faculty was the establishment of the first honor society in the department, Kappa Omicron Phi, still

Illustration by Samuel Crowe.

in place today but merged with another society to form Kappa Omicron Nu.

Through the years Carsie developed many other domestic skills in addition to her sewing talents. She loved to cook and recalls her first visit to Rhode Island to meet her mother-in-law. Professor Lodter's mother was French, so he had grown up on crusty hard rolls. But he had also developed an appreciation for Southern biscuits since relocating to Appalachia. While he and his new bride were visiting Edward's mother, he asked Carsie to show off her biscuit-making skills.

"I was really proud of my biscuits," Carsie recalls. "They were nice and fluffy, and they were puffed up and brown on top. I was surprised, amazed, and disappointed when Edward's mother opened the biscuit, peeled layer by layer of the flaky bread into her hand, and crushed it up tight to make a wad of hard dough.

"She said, 'See there, what a biscuit does in your stomach.' So she and I weren't heads together on cooking."

Even though her mother-in-law may not have appreciated her fluffy Southern biscuits, Carsie would establish herself in her community as a fine cook. She would share her culinary skills with her church family, especially her desserts, at the covered dish dinners. The congregation could always count on a delicious chocolate pound cake, coconut cake, or éclairs. Those éclairs amazed many women, since they were homemade and not purchased from local bakeries.

"It was my mother's recipe," she says. "Usually we made just cream puffs, mounded the dough batter, and put a cream filling in. What would make it an éclair would be the chocolate on top, and so that's how I started to make those, and they were pretty popular."

Another recipe that was traditional in her home was the birthday cake for the baby Jesus.

"That was a white cake with a white, boiled frosting and fresh coconut. I finally began to use frozen coconut, but originally we cracked the coconut and grated the stuff. Oh my, what a job!"

Carsie was never one to settle for second best in anything she did. She developed a love for growing and cultivating roses, joined the American Rose Society, and helped establish the Watauga Valley Rose Society. She took this hobby to the next level by entering roses in shows, earning trophies and blue ribbons.

With her love of sewing, it was natural for her to begin collecting thimbles. She has accumulated 244 of them from her travels, friends, and family.

Carsie has also proudly worn the title of mother of two accomplished children and now grandmother to those who will carry on the family name.

If there is one part of her life where she feels she hasn't achieved to the fullest, it's retirement.

"I don't like retirement much," she complains. But those around her would disagree, since she now has more time to devote to church and family.

No matter what she does, it's with love and devotion. All those who have been touched by her, whether one of her hundreds of grateful students, a proud relative, or just a lucky member of her church family, consider themselves blessed, and even more so when she shows up in an office or on a doorstep with a chocolate pound cake and a lesson about life.

❖

Renee Hart McNeely was born and raised in East Tennessee. She earned a bachelor's degree in general studies from East Tennessee State University in 2008.

BUILDING A LIFE AND A COMMUNITY AROUND THE CANDY JAR

James Watson

At eighty-three, Geraldine Watson was still healthy. She'd never had heart problems and the doctor had taken her off blood pressure medication years before. Despite being a bit curvy in places, she'd managed to avoid diabetes. She'd nursed younger siblings until they passed on, and surprisingly she held a steady health, even though the main staple in her diet seemed to be sugar.

Geraldine grew up in a part of the South where people still claim they didn't notice the Depression because they were already so poor, it never made a difference. Nestled deep into Appalachia, she lived on land that has been in her family for generations. Just up the road from her large white house was the home where she grew up. It was there in her parents' house where she bore her second child after deciding from her initial experience that a hospital was no place to give birth. She lived here on this same small creek all her life except the one year when, as a newlywed couple, she and her husband moved to the town of Elizabethton, Tennessee. Despite its population of just a few thousand and a high school where even today the principal knows each student's name, Elizabethton gave Geraldine enough experience with "city living" to bring her quickly back to her mountain home.

When she was growing up in the 1920s and '30s, the only store in the area was owned by her father, in the Heaton Creek community of Carter County. He ran the store and served as schoolmaster at Heaton Creek Elementary. Those two positions placed the family at the top of the social order.

"My grandfather had owned that store, and when he died, my daddy took it over," she said. "So all my growing up years, he had all the shortening, the sugar, brown sugar, flour, everything I needed, and I could just go get it, even when others couldn't afford it."

For the other children in the community, she found a basic recipe for chocolate fudge. Since there were so many children and so few had money, each could just bring a handful of sugar and the entire group could split a batch of the fudge, which she simply referred to as "candy." Without her candy—made weekly during her teenage years—few others on the creek would have had any regular sweets.

While Geraldine admitted she loved her candy for the taste, she said sweets do something among people other foods simply can't.

"You grow closer together. Take for instance the Gouges out here. You see, they was eleven children and they didn't have a lot of sweets or anything like that. Lots of times, I would go out there to feed the cattle and they lived out there, and I would take them candy. And to this day, they feel close to me, because that's what they think about: 'She done that when we was little.' They didn't get candy otherwise. It makes you close to people, especially when you don't have much."

Geraldine Watson stirs apple butter. Photo courtesy James Watson.

RECIPE

Granny's Chocolate Fudge

3 cups white sugar
½ cup Hershey's Cocoa
1 ½ cups milk
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 tablespoons butter

Mix sugar, cocoa, milk, and salt in an iron skillet. Place on medium heat, stir, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat while stirring occasionally. Continue stirring until candy reaches ball stage using cold water method. Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla and butter. Let cool until candy is lukewarm, then beat with wooden spoon until it stiffens and loses its gloss. Then pour out onto wax paper and allow to firm.

James Watson has worked as a Peace Corps volunteer in Central Africa and as a newspaper reporter covering Tennessee politics. He is now corporate director of public relations for Mountain States Health Alliance.

AT THE OLD-TIME JAMBOREE

—FOR KELSEY AND BECKY

KORY WELLS

A wiry bristle of an old man
stares with starving eyes at her
like he's labored in parched fields all day
and this ponytailed woman-child
forgot to bring him lunch, or even
a sweaty jar of sweet tea. Now, thirsting
in the pink spill of sunset, he studies

her milky neck, her teeth straight as a row
of kernels on the cob, reckons
she's a city girl who likely can't fix
a decent pan of corn bread, let alone
flaky biscuits or fried chicken. Still,
he keeps watching like she's the next
you-bake-right-with Martha White

cause he wants to see what she's got
in that case on her back. It's a fiddle
she warms up, grooving and greasing
bow over strings, tossing double-stops
and slurs like salt and soda, uh-huh.
Old tunes rise hot and fast over the heat
and beat of slap bass and tenor guitar,

over the crowd, and his juices flow,
yes ma'am. His blue-veined hand pats
a mellow beat on his meager middle
as if to wheedle his worn belt
into loosening itself a notch,
knowing she's going to feed him, him
and the whole hungry crowd.

Kory Wells grew up on the stories of her southern Appalachian family but has lived most of her life in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Her poetry and prose have appeared in *Pindeldyboz*, *New Southerner*, *Rock & Sling*, *Kudzu*, and many other publications. Wells' teenaged daughter, Kelsey, is a fiddler under the tutelage of Becky Buller, a bluegrass musician and songwriter who graduated from ETSU in 2001. An alumna of the school's Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Country Music Program, Buller tours internationally with Valerie Smith & Liberty Pike.

COOKING THE DOWN HOME BLUES

WAYNE WINKLER

Bluesman Wallace Coleman has traveled all over the world and has sampled some of the exotic cuisine found in foreign countries, as well as in his adopted hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. But he always delights in his annual visits back to his birthplace, Morristown, Tennessee, for some down-home cooking.

Coleman chuckled when asked about getting back home for some of his country favorites. "My wife is a good cook," he is quick to explain, "but we can't get that kind of food up there. When I come back home, my cousins cook the things I like best—pinto beans, mustard greens, turnip greens, corn bread."

Wallace Coleman was born in Morristown in 1936 and attended Morristown College High School, an adjunct of the historically African American Morristown College, but he finished high school in Oak Ridge. "I graduated in 1956 and came back to Morristown, then I left in 1957 to go to Cleveland and never came back."

Like most East Tennesseans, Coleman grew up hearing country music. "I remember 'The Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round,' which came on like at twelve noon every day. But as far as black music was concerned, I think there was a guy named Acie Boy Wilson that had an R&B show out of Knoxville. But I got into the blues by listening to WLAC out of Nashville."

At 1510 on the AM dial, WLAC sent out 50,000 watts of clear-channel AM power that brought blues, R&B, and soul to a huge late-night audience as far north as Canada. In the 1950s and '60s, disc jockeys like Gene Nobles, Bill "Hossman" Allen, and John Richbourgh, a.k.a. "John R.," brought the sound of the blues to Wallace Coleman's eager ears. "The first thing I heard was Little Walter's 'Juke,' and that harmonica sounded like a saxophone."

The harmonica became Coleman's main instrument from that time on. But the style he heard in East Tennessee didn't catch his ear like the sound of the blues. "Everyone around here was making sounds like trains, or like 'John Henry,' but they weren't playing any blues."

Coleman had no idea about making a living playing the harp. In 1957, he moved to Cleveland, where he worked in a bakery for thirty years. "I never had any other job," he recalls.

The bakery was secure, union work that paid well, and on Saturdays, when no supervisors were around, he could bring his harmonica to work and entertain himself on breaks. He would play out on the loading dock, accompanying songs on the radio. Said a co-worker, "Man, you sound just like Little Walter, or like Sonny Boy [Williamson]."

"As a matter of fact," Coleman told me, "Sonny Boy lived in Cleveland in 1961. I wasn't playing harmonica then, but I used to go watch him. I'd watch how he held his hands and learned some of the things he did."

Around 1985, the admiring co-worker introduced Coleman to Cleveland's Guitar Slim—not the Guitar

Wallace Coleman. Photo courtesy Jody Getz.

Slim from New Orleans who had a minor hit with "The Things I Used to Do."

"There's hundreds of 'Guitar Slims' all over the country," Coleman said. "We were settin' in the car there, foolin' around, and he said, 'You play good Chicago-style blues, and that's all I play.' So he invited me to come to what they call an 'after-hours' joint where he was playing, and I went down one night. We hit it off pretty good and he finally moved into this club. He already had a harp player, but when I went in and played, the harp player said, 'Man, you're the harp player; I'll play the guitar.' But I had never played in a club in my life until 1985."

Cleveland was also the home of a very prominent bluesman, Robert Jr. Lockwood. He earned the nickname "Robert Jr." because his mother had a relatively long-term relationship with legendary Mississippi Delta bluesman Robert Johnson. Johnson was only a few years older than Lockwood and taught the youngster some of his famous guitar techniques. Lockwood went on to regional fame playing with harmonica legend Sonny Boy Williamson on KFFA radio in Helena, Arkansas. "The King Biscuit Flour" program came on at noon every day, and between commercials for King Biscuit Flour and Sonny Boy Corn Meal, Lockwood, Williamson, and a host of other future blues legends performed live for an audience that sometimes seemed to include as many whites as blacks.

Lockwood moved north, eventually settling in Cleveland, where he heard Coleman playing with Guitar Slim's band. After being introduced, the first thing Lockwood asked was, "Who taught you how to play modern changes on a harp?"

"I didn't know what he was talking about," Coleman confesses. Lockwood explained that Coleman's style was more modern than the Delta styles of a generation before, and the ever-progressive Lockwood (who, after years of working with the likes of Little Walter and Sonny Boy Williamson, had claimed he would never hire a harmonica player) said, "I might be able to use you to play behind me."

Coleman still had about a year before he would be eligible to retire from the bakery, so Lockwood told him to call when he was available. Once Coleman was able to join Lockwood full time, he had to learn to fit his style to Lockwood's playing. "It almost drove me crazy," he recalls. "When I joined, I thought he was going to play the same things he played behind Walter and Sonny Boy, but he had his own sound. One day at practice he told me, 'I want you to concentrate on my music, not Walter's music or Sonny Boy's music.'"

To train Coleman's ears, Lockwood turned all the lights off in their basement rehearsal room. "I had my harmonicas lined up on top of my amplifier and he would start playing something, and I had to fish around to find the harmonica sound in the key he was playing. That got me to thinking, 'Man, this is some serious business.'"

Coleman accompanied Lockwood at clubs and festivals all over the world, but eventually he wanted to front his own band and left with Lockwood's blessing. Coleman's first CD, *Stretch My Money*, came out, followed by others: *Live at Joe's*, *Bad Weather Blues*, and his most recent release, a double-CD project with English bluesman Dave Thomas, *Repossession Blues*.

Robert Jr. Lockwood died in November of 2006. Coleman was one of the many performers to play at his memorial concert.

After years of visiting family and friends in Morristown, Coleman is starting to perform more gigs in the Southeast. Working with Jim Foster, formerly the frontman of Jimmie D. and B-Movie Blues, Coleman has played recent shows in Morristown and at the annual Little Chicago Blues Festival in Johnson City. "Playing all over the world is nice," Coleman says, "but it's really special to play in front of the people you grew up with." ❖

RADIO, BISCUITS, AND CORN BREAD

Wayne Winkler

In the early 1950s, Nashville's Royal Flour Mill hired Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, then relatively unknown bluegrass musicians, to promote its Martha White brand of flour. They were very successful, performing the Martha White theme song on the Grand Ole Opry and on their own radio and television programs.

But more than a decade before Flatt and Scruggs made Martha White Flour famous all over the South, radio listeners in the Mississippi Delta regularly tuned to KFFA, in Helena, Arkansas, to hear announcer "Sunshine" Sonny Payne announce, "Pass the biscuits, 'cause it's King Biscuit Time!"

Wallace Coleman's mentor, Robert Jr. Lockwood, was one of the original King Biscuit Entertainers, but the star of the show was Aleck "Rice" Miller, also known as Sonny Boy Williamson. Miller is often referred to as "Sonny Boy II" to distinguish him from a Chicago-based harmonica player, John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson, who was murdered in 1948. The Interstate Grocery Company, makers of King Biscuit Flour, felt they could sell more flour by giving Miller (who had been performing as "Little Boy Blue") the name of the more famous Chicago bluesman.

The fifteen-minute program aired at 12:15 every weekday afternoon, coinciding with the lunch break for Delta laborers. KFFA was heard all over the Mississippi Delta and influenced scores of bluesmen such as B.B. King, James Cotton, and Ike Turner. Other musicians appeared on the program, but Williamson and Lockwood were the anchors.

"King Biscuit Time" was one of the first radio programs aimed at an African American audience (although scores of white musicians and fans also tuned in), and before long other radio stations in the South began programming to black listeners.

The popularity of the radio program carried over to the flour as well, and the Interstate Grocery Company capitalized on the success by introducing "Sonny Boy Corn Meal," with a caricature of Williamson sitting on a corn cob playing his harmonica.

"King Biscuit Time" first aired on KFFA (1360 on the AM dial) in November of 1941, and the program continues today, still hosted by "Sunshine" Sonny Payne. Although the program now relies more on recorded music, live performers appear regularly to maintain the long-running tradition of the "King Biscuit Time." And although King Biscuit Flour (unlike Martha White Flour) is no longer available, the tradition of biscuits and the blues lives on. ❖

Wayne Winkler is music editor of *Now & Then* and host of "Blue Monday" on public radio station WETS-FM in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Image courtesy The Blues Archive, Archives and Special Collections, the University of Mississippi.

MUSIC IN BRIEF

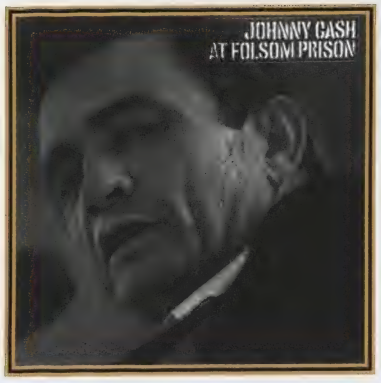
Wayne Winkler

Adam Larkey and Mountain Time
Limited Edition
Lonesome Records

The entertainment world has seen several young prodigies whose talents emerged at a very early age. Eleven-year-old Adam Larkey joins that company with the disc *Limited Edition*. The young fiddler leads his band Mountain Time through a well-performed set of traditional and bluegrass tunes. The disc mixes rollicking instrumentals like "Unicoi County" and "Salt Creek" with standards such as "Nine-Pound Hammer," "Orange Blossom Special," and Bob Dylan's "Nashville Skyline Rag." Adam's vocal takes on songs like "The Great Speckled Bird" and "You Don't Know My Mind" demonstrate his power and potential for the future. Ably backed by guitarists Eric Larkey and Josh Doss, Joe Honeycutt on mandolin, Jeremy Arrowood on bass, and John Hamm on banjo, Adam Larkey is a young voice in bluegrass but already sounds like a veteran. ❖

Sierra Hull
Secrets
Rounder Records

As Adam Larkey demonstrates, a new generation of bluegrass and traditional musicians is coming along. After beginning the mandolin at the age of eight, Sierra Hull, at sixteen, displays a mastery of the mandolin and beautiful vocals that promise to grow and mature with the artist. Although Hull released an instrumental CD, *Angel Mountain*, in 2002, *Secrets* is her national debut and shows the remarkable growth she achieved in the intervening years. On *Secrets*, Hull is ably assisted by co-producer Ron Block (Alison Krauss and Union Station), along with musicians and singers including Block, Barry Bales, Dennis Crouch, Jerry Douglas, Stuart Duncan, Clay Hess, Rob Ickes, Chris Jones, Jason Moore, Tony Rice, Dan Tyminski, Jim VanCleve, and seventeen-year-old banjo wizard Cory Walker, a long-time collaborator with Sierra. As co-producer Block says, "Sierra's only going to get better and better as time goes on." ❖



Johnny Cash
At Folsom Prison (deluxe edition)
Sony BMG Music

January 13, 1968, was a turning point for Johnny Cash. After years of performing for prison audiences, he had tried unsuccessfully to persuade Columbia Records to record one of his prison shows. When the company proved reluctant, Cash arranged for the recording himself. The resulting album, *At Folsom Prison*, turned him from just another country singer into an American icon, eventually leading to his ABC television program and entry into the mainstream of American popular culture. The original LP was drawn mostly from the first show, but the deluxe two-CD edition features the complete recordings of both, performed in the cafeteria of the maximum security section of California's Folsom Prison. In addition to Cash, we hear performances by Carl Perkins and the Statler Brothers, along with June Carter, who would marry Cash within a couple of months. The reason most of the original LP was drawn from the first show is obvious: The second show, while remarkable, lacks some of the energy of the earlier one. There are many previously unreleased tracks on this set, which is a must for Cash collectors. The ultra-deluxe boxed set also has a DVD, but since the shows at Folsom were not filmed, the DVD is comprised of interviews, still pictures, and filler. The real show is in the audio discs. On this one January day in 1968, behind the walls of one of America's most notorious prisons, Johnny Cash became an American icon. ❖

Valerie Smith & Becky Buller
Here's A Little Song
Bell Buckle Records

"We certainly aren't out to send the bluegrass world spinning sideways," said fiddler Becky Buller. "We just both happen to be big fans of classic duet acts such as the Louvin and Everly brothers. Our goal was to channel their sound into these new songs with stark arrangements that make the melodies, harmonies, and stories the focal points of our presentation." The disc *Here's A Little Song* was a long time in the making. In 2006 and 2007, Valerie Smith underwent two vocal surgeries. While unsure if Valerie would be able to speak again, much less sing, band leader and producer Buller began working on the instrumental tracks with Chad Graves and Bobby Davis, from Smith's band Liberty Pike, along with other musicians including Mike Compton and Alan O'Bryant (from the Nashville Bluegrass Band), Wayne Benson (IIIrd Tyme Out), Kristin Scott Benson (Larry Stephenson Band), and Justin Carbone (Special Consensus). The result is a classic duet album, blending the harmonies of Buller and Smith with outstanding and perfectly understated instrumental backing. Buller, who studied bluegrass, old-time, and country music at ETSU, demonstrates that she is a powerhouse on either side of the control-room window. ❖

BOOKS IN BRIEF

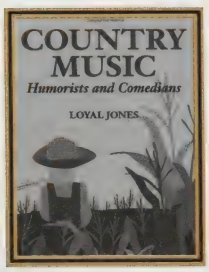
MARIANNE WORTHINGTON

I'll Fly Away
By Dory L. Hudspeth (Finishing Line Press, 2008)

Kentucky poet, herbalist, and historical researcher Dory Hudspeth's second poetry collection is tightly woven with crisp, imagistic poems that remind readers of the magic of bird songs. ❖

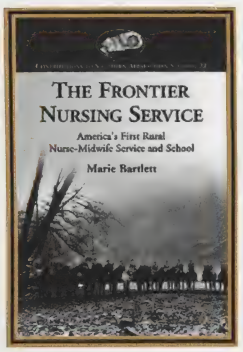
Dimming Radiance: Poems and Prose Parables
By Dan Stryk (Wind Publications, 2008)

Characterized by an international variety of writing forms, Stryk's recommended collection is described by activist and memoirist Janisse Ray as "a holy text, simple yet transcendental, demanding yet merciful, common yet sublime." ❖



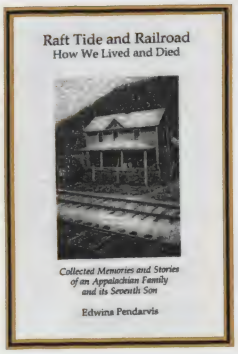
Country Music Humorists and Comedians
By Loyal Jones (University of Illinois Press, 2008)

Loyal Jones' long journey into the world of country music humorists is finally revealed for his eager readers in this exhaustive encyclopedia of country music humorists and comedians. Written in Jones' compelling and amusing style, this treasure is full of jokes, song lyrics, conversations, and photos to enhance the meticulously researched entries on hundreds of country music comedic entertainers. ❖



The Frontier Nursing Service: America's First Rural Nurse-Midwife Service and School
By Marie Bartlett (McFarland & Company, 2008)

Part of McFarland's continuing "Contributions to Southern Appalachian Studies," this engaging story recounts the life and service of Mary Breckinridge and the Frontier Nursing Service in Leslie County, Kentucky. For over forty years the Frontier Nursing Service provided health care for women and infants, mostly by nurses who reached their patients in the rugged and isolated terrain of Eastern Kentucky by horseback. ❖

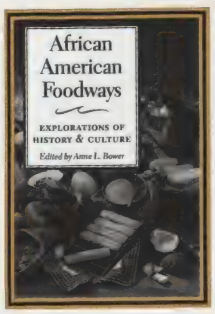

Raft Tide and Railroad
How We Lived and Died
Collected Memories and Stories of an Appalachian Family and its Seventh Son
Edwina Pendarvis

Raft Tide and Railroad: How We Lived and Died: Collected Memories and Stories of an Appalachian Family and its Seventh Son
By Edwina Pendarvis (Blair Mountain Press, 2008)

Writer and educator Eddy Pendarvis retells her Eastern Kentucky family's story in an inclusive and humorous style. *Raft Tide* is an uncompromising and noteworthy Appalachian memoir. ❖

Her Secret Song
By Jim Minick (MotesBooks, 2008)

One of two new poetry collections Minick released in 2008, this book tells the story of the poet's Aunt Ruth, a woman who struggled with poverty, loneliness, cancer, and neurofibromatosis, more crudely known as "elephant man's disease." Minick's elegy for his beloved aunt is essential and memorable. ❖



African American Foodways: Explorations of History & Culture
Edited by Anne L. Bower (University of Illinois Press, 2007)

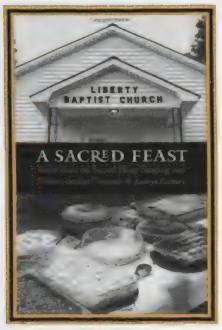
This multidisciplinary collection of essays demonstrates how the symbolic value of food contributes to our identities. Tracing African American foodways for over three centuries, the writers present what *Choice* magazine called "an exquisite mélange of American and black history; famous black Americans and people they served; allusions to jazz, poetry, rap, stories, and literature; and food traditions [that] make up this credible, readable book." ❖

Packing Light: New and Selected Poems
By Marilyn Kallet (Black Widow Press, 2009)

Knoxville-based poet and educator Marilyn Kallet does not disappoint in her latest poetry collection that spans thirty years. In addition to Kallet's characteristically intelligent and ironic verse, her new work includes several gut-wrenching poems about the Holocaust, reminding us that "Americans do not often taste ashes." ❖

The Place Setting: Timeless Tastes of the Mountain South, from Bright Hope to Frog Level, Thirds
By Fred W. Sauceman (Mercer University Press, 2009)

Now & Then editor and food columnist Fred Sauceman's third volume of stories, interviews, and recipes from the Appalachian region continues his celebration of regional foodways. Always enthusiastic to uncover the story behind the food, Sauceman shares entertaining and reverent tales that will make you want to get in the car and go sample for yourself. ❖



A Sacred Feast: Reflections on Sacred Harp Singing and Dinner on the Ground
By Kathryn Eastburn (University of Nebraska Press, 2008)

Filled with what one writer called "harmony, heartache, and home cooking," Eastburn's book documents not only the tradition of Sacred Harp singing in the South and beyond but also the culinary feasts that often accompany the gatherings. Her recipes and ruminations are both cookbook and documentary of these singing communities. ❖

NEW RELIGION

Jim Minick

It takes us awhile to realize we've become prophets of a new religion. We built a church, it seems, without intending, and now the rows fill up each day with worshipers, a congregation coming to take the sacrament, to eat the holy goodness of real food. The religion is "organic," and whether we like it or not, we've created this house of worship, a blueberry farm in southwest Virginia.

Our most devout members are cancer survivors. They've realized the wrongness of their past diets and have converted to a strict organic menu. I listen to their stories, admire their courage, and am thankful they're here to enjoy a sunny day in our field. And that is life's essence, isn't it, one day to the next, taking care of finding your food in the most healthful way.

Kate and Connie show up one morning in a shiny SUV with Ohio plates. They're strangers who, like many folks, stumble onto our Web page or hear about us from a friend. All of them drive the extra miles just because we're certified organic.

"All the way from Ohio?" I ask, after first greeting them.

"Just for your organic berries," Kate smiles. Then she explains that they own land nearby and hope to build and move here soon once they sell their restaurant business back north.

She is a large woman and, I can quickly tell, also large in heart. She loves the field, the quiet, and is not afraid to tell her own story. While Connie wanders into the bushes to pick, Kate stays back, says, "We're glad you're here. We've converted to an all organic diet since I had breast cancer, and it's not easy finding fresh fruit like this. We're really glad to be here."

And of course, I'm glad they're here, strangers and friends, survivors all. We hear similar stories at least once a week, usually from women, sometimes from adult children or siblings who tell of losing their father or sister and then reading the often hidden truths of our food system. Usually, underneath there swims an anger, a disbelief that our beef could be called safe, or that so many pesticides wouldn't also

Jim Minick in his blueberry patch. Photo courtesy Sarah Minick.

affect our drinking water. They've had to educate themselves, read and search out information not usually covered in the media.

"And they call our food safe," Beverly, another cancer survivor, laments in the shade of the pine trees, taking a break from picking blueberries. She too has lost a breast, and her mother.

"When will people wake up?" she asks. I can only say, I hope soon. And slowly, as more and more people find us, traveling to our small Virginia field from Blacksburg and Roanoke, over an hour away, I keep this hope, this faith.

But to be honest, I'm not a very religious person, spiritual, maybe, but religious, not really. Too many dogmas barking and biting at each other. So this organic religion makes me uncomfortable, makes me, even, skeptical. This skepticism is bolstered when I learn how the official organic rule defines "free-range" for chickens: an open door that the birds are too afraid to use. Or when I consider all the fuel that goes into even organic food to grow and cool and haul it everywhere.

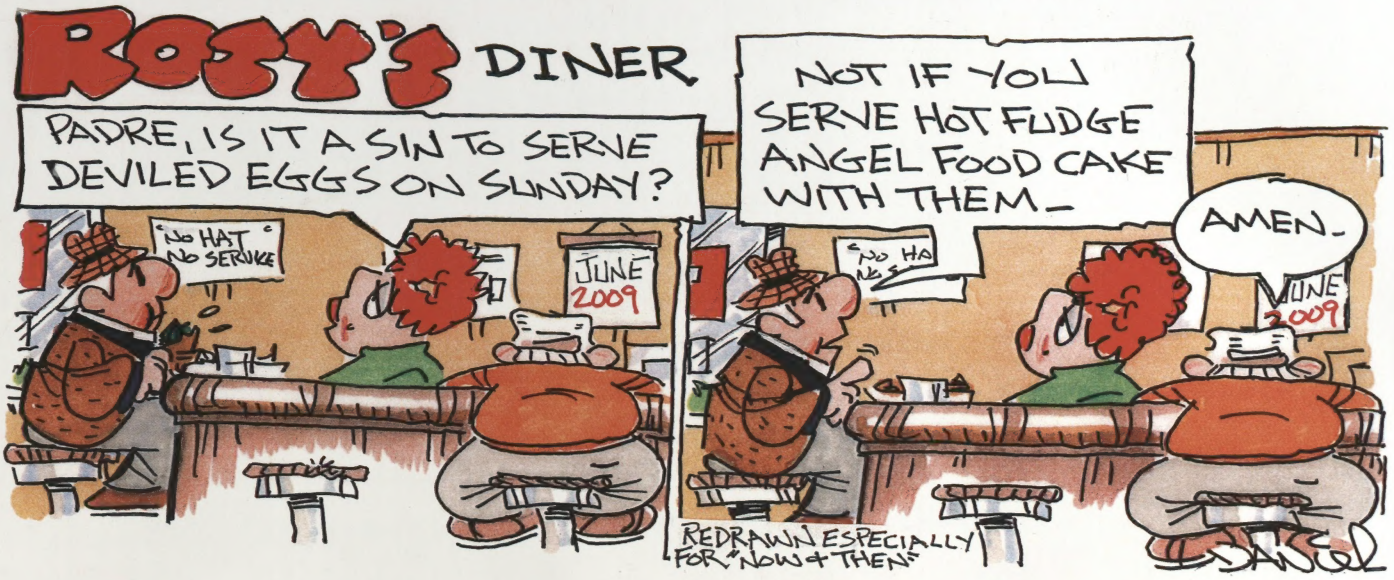
And to be honest, when I truly analyze our own farm, I realize we're not really "organic" either. Oh, sure, we abide by the law and use only approved fertilizers and pesticides. Instead of my neighbor John's potent, petroleum-based standard of 10-10-10 that keeps him in red fields of strawberries, our organic fertilizers are mostly mined rocks and dried, pulverized blood and cottonseed. And even as we shell out the extra money for what John calls our "magic powders," even as we vow to never use synthetic or petroleum-based fertilizers or herbicides, I realize early on that we will never truly be "organic." The word organic implies a circle, "a systemic connexion or coordination of parts in one whole," so says my old *O.E.D.* that doesn't even mention the word's new "connexion" to agriculture. Ideally I think of organic as a closed system where the farm supplies its own fertilizer (through animal manure and cover crops) and for us, our own mulch. But we don't have the land, desire, or knowledge to farm animals, and cover crops don't work well with perennial plants. To supply our own mulch, we'd have to invest in a huge chipper, a gas-gulping machine far from any ideal of organic.

The root of organic is organ, the vital parts of an organism. "Organic vein" is an old name for the jugular. So maybe farming organically is getting at the heart, getting closer to health. Maybe this organic religion will help us all survive this messed-up food system, transform it into something that doesn't value cheapness over all else, doesn't look at food as a commodity or even as a weapon, but instead understands the holiness of this world we all ingest with each bite, the holiness of our own bodies that is no different from the holiness of this one earth. Maybe.

Jim Minick is the author of two new books of poetry, *Her Secret Song* and *Burning Heaven*. He teaches at Radford University, lives in southwest Virginia, and is working on a memoir about a blueberry farm, due out in 2010 from Thomas Dunne of St. Martin's Press.

SIGNING OFF

Charles Daniel, cartoonist for the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, kindly shares his wit and wisdom as a regular feature of *Now & Then*. For this issue he sent two "Rosy's Diner" cartoons from which to choose. We chose both (see back cover for a second-helping of life at Rosy's Diner).


ROSY'S DINER
PADRE, IS IT A SIN TO SERVE DEVILED EGGS ON SUNDAY?
NO HAT NO SERVICE
JUNE 2009
NOT IF YOU SERVE HOT FUDGE ANGEL FOOD CAKE WITH THEM-
AMEN-
JUNE 2009
REDRAWN ESPECIALLY FOR "NOW & THEN"
DANCOL

NOW & THEN

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